

Horse Owners Assured on Use of VEE Vaccine

Further studies just completed should reassure horse owners about the vaccine used to protect horses against Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (VEE) the U.S. Department of

Agriculture reported. Studies to determine the effect of VEE vaccine on the central nervous system of horses were conducted at Denver, Colo. and Ames, Iowa by the Veterinary Sciences Research Division (VSRD) of USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The brains and spinal cords of 45 horses were examined grossly and microscopically.

"Although mild, transitory effects in tissues of the central nervous system were observed following vaccination, no evidence of damage to either the brain or spinal cord was found in horses examined between 10 and 49 days following vaccination," Dr. Paul DeLay, VSRD Director, said.

"Some of the horses in the test developed low fever and appeared slightly ill following vaccination, but all of these signs disappeared after 10 days," he said.

These tests confirm our findings in the field last year when over 2.8 million horses were vaccinated in 19 States and the District of Columbia," Dr. Francis J. Mulhern, Administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Service (APHS) said. "With these favorable results with the vaccine tests

under controlled conditions, we again urge all horse owners to vaccinate for VEE, because this virus could break out anywhere in the country."

Experiments still in progress will evaluate the effects of the vaccine on pregnant mares and young foals. Tests are also being conducted to determine the quality and duration of immunity, Dr. DeLay reported.

Although VEE was confirmed in only 26 counties in southern Texas last year, animal health officials emphasize that the disease could break out any place in this country. Use of the VEE vaccine, available through veterinarians, is the only means of protecting horses against infection.

Vaccination for eastern and western types of encephalitis does not provide protection against VEE.

VEE is spread from horse to horse and from horse to humans principally by bites of mosquitoes. Animal health officials urge that all horses not vaccinated last year be vaccinated before mosquitoes emerge. Regions considered "high risk" include Texas and adjoining States, Gulf Coast States and States adjoining Mexico. Since the virus was

found in Texas, that State remains under Federal quarantine—requiring vaccination of all horses before being transported outside Texas.

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