

# Equine Education Program Keeps Ring Busy During Ag Progress Days

(Continued from Page A24)

reaction is, the training is taken slowly," he said. The animal is introduced to strange sounds and sights as the trainers work to build the horse's confidence.

Riders sit on an English saddle, which has proven to be comfortable for long days in the saddle and allows riders room to transport equipment or even perform searches from horseback.

### West Nile Information

Director of pesticide education program at Penn State, Dr. Win Hock, educated the audience about the West Nile disease.

The mosquito-borne virus was detected for the first in the U.S. in August 1999. The virus can cause encephalitis, characterized by brain and spinal cord inflammation.

In October 2000 the first case was reported in a Pennsylvania horse. One year earlier 25 horses were confirmed to have West Nile encephalitis. Nine horses died or were euthanized.

Wild birds are primary hosts of the virus. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite an infected bird, then may transmit the disease to humans, horses, or other birds.

Although one-half of the horses identified with West Nile virus recovered from the disease, it may also be fatal. Clinical signs may include loss of appetite, fever, weakness or paralysis of hind limbs, impaired vision, aimless wandering, convulsions, inability to swallow, circling, hyperexcitability, or coma.

To date, there is no vaccine and treatment for horses — treat-

ment focuses on reducing the severity of the disease.

Decreasing the risk of a mosquito bite is a common sense way to guard about the virus.

Keeping the horses stabled during hours of high mosquito activity — dusk and dawn — reduces risk. Also, owners can avoid turning on lights inside the stable in the evening and overnight hours, since mosquitoes are attracted to incandescent bulbs. They are neither attracted to nor repelled by fluorescent lights. Placing an incandescent bulb 50 yards from the stable may attract mosquitoes away from the horses.

Ultrasonic devices and bug-zappers have not proven to be a solution, said Hock. Using insect repellent with 10-35 percent Deet provides adequate protection under most condition for humans.

Also, "control mosquitoes around your home," said Hock. "Most mosquitoes do not fly far from their home breeding ground." This includes eliminating standing water in manure storage pits, dirty water troughs, and the puddles around the troughs.

Additionally, residents can help the state monitor the virus' status. The state is interested in testing any freshly-deceased birds that residents find, he said. Hock advised the audience to take the dead bird to a county health department's drop-off point in a double plastic bag. "You cannot get the virus from handling the bird," he said.

Since birds can provide an early warning that the virus is active in an area, residents should call 1-877-724-3258 for drop-off instructions.



Emmy Wheland, 16, riding Appaloosa "Coin," and Annie Steed, with Arabian "Marscottl," both from Pennsylvania Furnace, are a part of the Keystone Dressage and Combined Training Association that performed in the horse arena.



A pair of Morgans driven by Bruce Rappoport, New Bolton Center, were another highlight of the events in the horse ring.

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