

OSU Equine Experts Recommend Vaccination Of Horses For West Nile Virus

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State University equine internists are recommending that horse owners vaccinate their animals against West Nile vaccine for equines, including horses. The vaccine was to be available starting in September and officials are recommending that horses be vaccinated twice this fall. The vaccine requires an initial dose and second dose three to six weeks later.

Horse owners who are interested in vaccinating their horses should contact their local veterinarian, and veterinarians are being encouraged to place orders so the company will have some indication of the demand for the vaccine.

The vaccine is made with a killed virus and has limited efficacy data. However, a similar vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis virus, which is closely related to West Nile virus, has been used for many years. The efficiency of the Japanese Encephalitis vaccine has been reported at 80 percent. Cases of West Nile virus in horses have occurred as late as October 2000 in the eastern United States.

As part of the safety study of the vaccine, 649 horses and ponies were vaccinated. Systemic or local reactions occurred in very few of the vaccinated horses. Three horses had localized site reactions (swelling and soreness); two horses were reported to have a fever following the initial vaccination only; and two horses had other reactions (mild diarrhea within eight hours of injection in one horse and one horse was treated for colic within a few hours of the initial vaccination). According to the report filed by Fort Dodge Animal Health, the vaccine did not induce any severe local or systemic adverse reactions in 98.5 percent of the vaccinations. Therefore, the vaccine appears to be safe.

Horse owners planning to export their animals should be aware that vaccinated animals may not meet the import requirements of receiving countries due to the presence of anti-West Nile virus antibodies in blood. While these antibodies are present transiently, presence of the antibody when the horse is due to be

exported could result in denial of permission to import.

In horses that do become clinically ill, the virus infects the central nervous system and causes signs of encephalitis. Clinical signs of encephalitis in horses include loss of appetite and depression, in addition to any combination of the following: fever, weakness or paralysis of hind limbs; impaired vision; ataxia (incoordination); head pressing; aimless wandering; convulsions; inability to swallow; circling; hyperexcitability or coma.

Horse owners are encouraged not to become complacent once their horses have been vaccinated. Elimination of mosquito breeding sites and personal protection are still important. Another important role the horse owner may play in efforts to prevent West Nile virus is to continue to report dead bird sightings to their local health department. The local health department will determine if those dead birds should be transported to ODA for pathologic examination.

USDA Needs Help From Horse Owners With West Nile Vaccinated Horses

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Veterinarians have been asked by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to help determine the immune response of West Nile Virus vaccinated horses.

The Fort Dodge equine vaccine for protection against disease from WNV infection was made available to Pennsylvania veterinarians in mid-September of 2002. Very little information concerning the immune response in vaccinated horses is available at this time.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is requesting that veterinarians ask clients with vaccinated horses to allow blood samples to be taken between seven and 21 days after the

second vaccine dose. These samples should be submitted in chilled red-top tubes to the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory for antibody testing.

At this time, there are no charges for shipping and testing of WNV samples. The dates of vaccinations should be included in the box with the samples. If your veterinarian asked for your help in this study please consider participating.

The ELISA test is used to detect IgG antibodies in vaccinated horses within a seven to 21 day time period. Results of testing of vaccinated horses will be submitted to the USDA. Horse owners will not be sent the results.

Newly Patented Virus Could Help Control Disease-Carrying Mosquitoes

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — One mosquito genus, called Culex, has been found to transmit WNV and the closely related St. Louis encephalitis (SLE). Now Agricultural Research Service scientists have received a patent for a baculovirus — a virus specific to arthropods — that kills Culex mosquitoes. The patent also includes a method for transmitting the baculovirus to them. The baculovirus infects only Culex mosquitoes — not other insects, plants, wildlife or people.

Baculoviruses are extremely uncommon in mosquitoes. However, James J. Becnel, an entomologist with the ARS Center for Medical, Agricul-

tural and Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville, Fla., discovered a novel baculovirus in 1997. Called CuniNPV, it is very stable and persistent and is a promising candidate to develop into a larvicide.

The baculovirus is activated when it is mixed with magnesium. When the mixture is added into any body of water where mosquitoes breed, larvae ingest it.

According to Becnel, the virus can

kill 85 to 95 percent of mosquitoes in their natural habitat after two to three days. The magnesium will not harm the water.

ARS, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific research agency, is seeking partners to license the technology and bring it to the market.



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