

# West Nile Virus Equine Vaccine Receives Full Licensure

**MIFFLINBURG (Union Co.)** — With spring here and mosquitoes in the offing, it is another West Nile Virus season. Now is the time to vaccinate or revaccinate your horses. It is important to do this now before the mosquitoes begin to fly in search of blood meals again with the coming of the warmer weather.

It is recommended that if your horse has never been vaccinated before, that you begin the process as soon as possible. The vaccination requires two shots. After the initial injection is given, a booster shot needs to be administered three weeks later. If your horse

has already been vaccinated it is recommended that a booster is given yearly to protect against the virus.

It is very important to realize that there is no cross protection between vaccines. This means that if your horse is vaccinated against Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE), or Venezuelan Equine Encephalitis (VEE) for example, it will not be protected against the West Nile Virus.

In 2002 there were a reported 97 equine cases in Pennsylvania. Most horses are able to recover from the virus, however, those

horses that are affected the most severely may die or need to be euthanized. This is only necessary in the most extreme cases of the neurological disease.

A horse becomes infected with the virus after being bitten by an infected mosquito. After being injected the virus multiplies in the horse's blood cells, crosses the blood brain barrier, and infects the brain.

Some of the symptoms that occur are loss of appetite, fever, weakness or paralysis of hind limbs, stumbling, walking in circles, muzzle twitching, or coma. If your horse shows any of these

signs, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

There are also ways to try and protect your horses from being exposed to mosquitoes.

The easiest ways to do this is to eliminate any standing water from your property that may serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Remove discarded tires, clean clogged roof gutters, empty or refill water troughs, and dispose of any unwanted container that could hold water. Avoid turning on lights inside the stable during evening and overnight hours. If lights are needed you can place incandescent lights outside the

stable to attract mosquitoes away from the horses.

On Feb. 6 a license for the vaccine was reissued to change the license status from conditional to full licensure. This means that all the restrictions of a conditional license have been lifted following a full year of research on the vaccine itself. It has been found that there is a 94 percent efficacy for the prevention of viremia in horses that are vaccinated.

For more information visit [www.westnile.state.pa.us](http://www.westnile.state.pa.us) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and search for West Nile Virus.

## WHIP Assists In Conservation

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — To help farmers and ranchers restore and protect wildlife habitat, the USDA provides technical and financial assistance through a voluntary conservation program reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) includes the option of a 15-year agreement, in addition to the standard five and 10-year agreements, for landowners who voluntarily limit future use of their land in order to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas.

Since WHIP began in 1998, about 11,000 participants have enrolled more than 1.6 million acres into the program.

These agreements fund up to 100 percent for implementing practices specifically targeted to restore and protect essential plant and animal habitat. NRCS state conservationists, with advice from their state technical committee, will identify essential plant and animal habitat within the state that is eligible for increased cost-share assistance.

Additional information on WHIP and other conservation programs is available on the Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/products.html>.



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