

West Nile Virus Confirmed in Kansas Horse

The Kansas Department of Agriculture Division of Animal Health (KDA–DAH) was notified in August by the Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory that a horse in Reno County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). The horse was euthanized due to the severity of the illness. This is the first reported equine case of WNV in Kansas in 2017. Horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their horses to prevent the spread of WNV.

West Nile virus is the most common mosquito-borne disease in Kansas and in the United States. It causes severe neurological disease in horses. Birds and humans are also susceptible to the virus; other livestock and pet animals are not susceptible to WNV. Clinical signs in horses can include fever, incoordination, generalized weakness, drooping lips, teeth grinding and inability to rise. There is no specific treatment for WNV, but there are several effective vaccines available for use in horses.

Vaccines have proven to be a very effective prevention tool. Horses that have been vaccinated in past years will need an annual booster shot. Horse owners should also consult their private practicing veterinarian to determine an appropriate disease prevention plan for their horses.

In addition to vaccinations, horse owners also need to reduce the mosquito populations and their possible breeding areas.

For more information about WNV or other animal disease issues in Kansas, go to the KDA–DAH website at agriculture.ks.gov/AnimalHealth. If you have questions, please call KDA–DAH at 785-564-6601.