

Veterinarians recommend West Nile virus vaccinations for horses

West Nile virus can affect humans, horses, and many types of birds. It is carried by mosquitoes, which become carriers by feeding on infected birds. The first case in Oregon was reported in Malheur County in August 2004. In 2007, 17 Oregon horses tested positive for the virus and there were 27 human cases.

Since the virus is now endemic in Oregon, the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association and its member veterinarians remind you that it is important to vaccinate your horses, as well as to give annual boosters. The vaccine requires two doses given three to six weeks apart. Immunity may not be achieved until up to six weeks after the second dose, and some horses may require a third vaccination. An annual booster should be given prior to the start of the mosquito season in your area; typically, this booster would be given around this time of year. Consult your veterinarian for more information on immunizing your horses against West Nile Virus.

The virus causes inflamma-

tion of the brain. Equines who contract the virus can experience lack of coordination, stumbling, confusion, fever, stiffness, muscle twitching, depression, and weakness in the legs. About one-third of infected horses die.

If you suspect your horse is infected with West Nile Virus contact your veterinarian for an examination. Veterinarians are required to report horses with the appropriate clinical signs. Contact the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture at 503-986-4760 before submitting any samples for testing.

Humans can only get the virus from the bite of an infected mosquito; the disease does not spread from other animals to humans, or from person to person. The illness causes no symptoms in 80 percent of those who are infected. Of those who develop an infection, most are mild, with fever and flu-like symptoms. About one in 150 develops severe illness, including coma, convulsions, paralysis and vision loss. The most severe cases, as well as most deaths, occur in those

over 55 who have conditions such as diabetes or hypertension or chronic illness.

In addition to vaccinating your horses, the best way to minimize the threat of West Nile for your and your horses is to control mosquito populations and prevent exposure to them.

Eliminate sources of standing water that can serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes, including children's wading pools, old tires, buckets, and other containers.

Change water in bird baths weekly.

Consider avoiding outdoor activities from dusk until dawn or take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning.

When possible, wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.

Treating clothes with repellents containing permethrin or DEET will provide extra protection, since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin or DEET directly to skin.

To report the suspicious illness or death of equines or livestock: Oregon Department of Agriculture, 503-986-4760

To report a dead or ill bird: Contact your county health department or vector control agency, or Oregon Fish and Wildlife, 503-947-6322.

Notify your local county health authorities of birds that have died within the past 24 hours. Call only if you find two

or more dead crows, jays, ravens or magpies; these are the only birds that are tested.

The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is a nonprofit

organization of veterinarians who are dedicated to helping people give their animals a high quality of life.

Events focus on horse management

Horse management on small acreages will be the focus of three free events sponsored by Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in partnership with Columbia, Clackamas, and West Multnomah SWCDs.

Mud and Manure Management will be the topic at the first event on Wednesday, March 12, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus, Building 9, Room 122b.

The second event will focus

on Pasture Management and will be held Wednesday, March 19, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the PCC Rock Creek Campus, Building 9, Room 122b.

The final event will be Farm Tours on Saturday, April 12, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Abbey Creek Stables & Shadysprings Farm.

Please register for these FREE events by calling Tualatin SWCD at 503-648-3174, ext. 102 or by e-mail at lacey.townsend@or.nacdn.net.

Workshop on disappearing frogs



Are frogs disappearing? Yes, according to researchers, and the rate of their disappearance is alarming.

"Frogs are in severe decline in the Northwest and all over the world," says Oregon Zoo Director Tony Vecchio. "Without an immediate intervention, one-third to one-half of the world's amphibian species could become extinct in our

lifetime. This would constitute an extinction comparable to that of the dinosaurs."

In an effort to spread the word about the global frog crisis, the Oregon Zoo and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are hosting an amphibian conservation workshop on April 7, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the zoo.

Landowners, biologists, watershed councils, conservation groups and others are invited to share information and discuss opportunities for action.

The workshop will highlight issues such as climate change, disease, pollutants and invasive species, all of which are causing a rapid decline in frog populations. Copies of the newly published "Habitat Management Guidelines" for Northwest amphibians and reptiles will be available at the workshop for \$10 each.

Following the presentations, participants may choose between a breakout session providing more detailed guidance to land managers or a panel discussion on data collection and management.

For more information on the workshop, or to obtain registration forms, visit www.oregonzoo.org/Events/Calendar/2008/08apr.htm#amphibians or contact Suzanne Rosen by email (suzanne.rosen@oregonzoo.org). The deadline for registration is March 21.

Photo by Michael Durham, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo.

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