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## FAST FACTS ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS DISEASE (WNV)

### **DEFINITION**

WNV DISEASE CAUSES AN ENCEPHALITIS OR SWELLING OF THE BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD. WNV HAD NOT BEEN DETECTED IN THE US UNTIL 1999, BUT THE VIRUS WAS FIRST IDENTIFIED IN 1937 IN THE WEST NILE REGION OF UGANDA.

### **CAUSE**

WNV IS AN ARBOVIRUS, A VIRUS THAT SPREADS BY MOSQUITOES. MOSQUITOES ACQUIRE THE VIRUS FROM INFECTED BIRDS AND THEN CAN PASS THE VIRUS TO HORSES AND PEOPLE. THE VIRUS DOES NOT SPREAD FROM HORSE TO HORSE OR FROM HORSE TO PEOPLE.

### **CLINICAL SIGNS**

THE INCUBATION PERIOD IS 6-10 DAYS AND WHEN SIGNS APPEAR THEY MAY INCLUDE: LOSS OF COORDINATION, WEAKNESS IN HINDQUARTERS, STUMBLING, CONVULSIONS, CIRCLING, MUSCLE TREMORS, HYPEREXCITABILITY, DOWN AND UNABLE TO RISE, COMA, OR ACUTE DEATH.

### **DIAGNOSIS**

TISSUE AND BLOOD SAMPLES, AS WELL AS CLINICAL SIGNS.

### **TREATMENT**

NO TREATMENT EXISTS FOR THIS TYPE OF ENCEPHALITIS.

### **PROGNOSIS**

DEATH MAY OCCUR 50% OF THE TIME WITHIN 5 TO 10 DAYS OF DEVELOPMENT OF SERIOUS SIGNS; OTHERWISE, RECOVERY WILL OCCUR, WITH THE MOST DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT WITHIN 3 WEEKS.

### **PREVENTION**

THE KEY IS MOSQUITO CONTROL - ELIMINATE THE NUMBER OF MOSQUITOES AND INHIBIT THEIR BREEDING: ELIMINATE STANDING WATER, KEEP PROPERTY CLEAR OF POOLS OF STAGNANT WATER, AND CLEAN WATER TROUGHS ONCE OR TWICE WEEKLY. ALSO, LIMIT HORSE EXPOSURE TO ADULT MOSQUITOES: STABLE HORSES INSIDE DURING PEAK MOSQUITO FEEDING TIMES, AND USE INSECT REPELLENT.

### **VACCINATION**

VACCINATION IS RECOMMENDED IN AREAS WHERE WNV OCCURS AND IF THE HORSE WILL BE TRAVELING TO SHOWS WHERE THE DISEASE EXISTS.

-Dr. Lyda W. Denney-