

Testing

West Nile Virus cannot be diagnosed in a live animal without a blood test. It is important to identify infected animals, since they indicate that mosquitoes carrying the virus are in the area. Steps can then be taken to reduce the number of mosquitoes. For more information, ask your veterinarian or call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

West Nile Virus in People

West Nile Virus generally does not cause severe illness in healthy people. Most people that are bitten by an infected mosquito do not become ill. Many of those infected that do become ill show signs of a mild, flu-like illness. Others may develop more severe symptoms. Call the Dept. of Health or your physician for more information on the disease and how to reduce your risk of infection.

Remember: Mosquitoes can multiply in any water puddle that lasts more than 4 days.



For More Information About West Nile Virus:

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture:

Dr. Nan Hanshaw Roberts
(WNV Coordinator): 717-783-6897
Hours 8 to 4.

Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory:

717-787-8808
Hours 8 to 4.

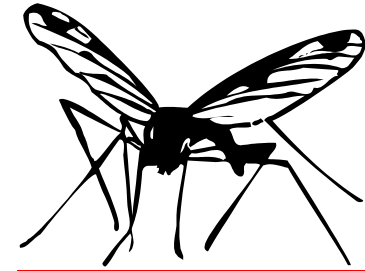
Website:

www.westnile.state.pa.us
<http://www.pda.state.pa.us/>

Pennsylvania Department of Health:

1-877-PA-HEALTH

West Nile Virus



PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services

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Background Information

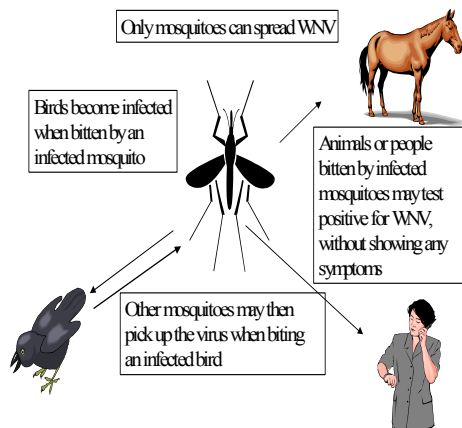
West Nile Virus was first found in the United States in 1999. The virus was previously found only in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It was probably introduced into this country by an infected bird or mosquito. Since 1999, it has spread across 46 states and parts of Canada.

West Nile Virus can cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, in susceptible animals and people.

How is West Nile Virus spread?

A mosquito infected with WNV may infect a bird when taking a blood meal from that bird. Other mosquitoes can then pick up the virus from the infected bird. Other animals, including horses, and people can become infected when bitten by a mosquito that is carrying the virus. **Only mosquitoes can spread WNV.**

Transmission Cycle of West Nile Virus



What animals are most at risk?

Birds and horses are the animals most likely to develop illness from infection with West Nile Virus. Crows are especially susceptible, and most crows that are infected become sick and die. Not all horses that become infected actually get sick. In horses that do become ill, symptoms can range from mild depression and lethargy to signs of severe neurologic disease.

West Nile Virus has been diagnosed in other animals, including cattle, dogs and cats. Most of these animals did not show any signs of illness after infection. Animals that do become ill may show signs of encephalitis, similar to horses. If you have questions concerning WNV in animals, or testing for animals, contact your veterinarian or the PDA.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for animals that do develop symptoms following infection with West Nile Virus. Supportive veterinary care of animals showing illness is recommended.

Prevention

A vaccine for horses is now available. Owners should keep records of vaccination, because current testing methods cannot distinguish between vaccinated and infected horses. This may affect international shipping of horses. Vaccination of horses against EEE, WEE, and VEE **does not** protect

them from being infected with West Nile Virus. Although a vaccine for WNV is available, mosquito control is still important.

The best method of prevention is reducing the chance of exposure to the virus. This means elimination of mosquitoes and their hatching sites by reducing the amount of standing water on your property. If you need help evaluating your property, contact your local DEP office.

Control Program

The Department of Agriculture is cooperating with the Departments of Health and Environmental Protection to find mosquitoes that may spread the virus in PA. WNV has been declared a reportable disease. If a positive horse or other animal is identified, DEP will contact the owner to set up a visit so that they can help the animal's owner evaluate the farm or home property for mosquitoes and mosquito hatching areas. Control measures may be carried out if it is necessary to reduce the risk. This risk analysis and mosquito control is free and may help prevent additional cases of WNV in the state. Owner information will be kept confidential.