



10 WEST NILE VIRUS FACTS FOR NORTHWEST HORSE OWNERS

- 1. NOW** – May is the best month to vaccinate horses in our region. The reason is wet spring weather means mosquito season is here. Horse owners who vaccinate their animals now ensure their horses are best protected as soon as possible.
- 2. CONSULT** – Your local veterinarian is well informed about West Nile virus (WNV) risks in each state and can best advise horse owners on vaccination protocols. Call your veterinarian now to ensure they have the vaccine in stock and ask any other questions you may have.
- 3. WASHINGTON** – The Evergreen State leads the nation in confirmed WNV cases in horses. There were 27 confirmed cases in 2016 and 36 in 2015. Seven horses died or were humanely euthanized for the disease in 2015. The good news is, the vast majority of horses exposed to WNV will show mild to almost no symptoms at all.
- 4. WHERE** – While various Washington counties are noted to have had cases of equine WNV, which counties may not be as important as simply knowing your horse has been vaccinated. People travel with their horses for pleasure and events. At any given time, exposure to mosquitoes carrying WNV is likely. Don't gamble with your horses' health.
- 5. PEOPLE** – WNV can infect people but does not spread from horses to people or to other animals. People get it the same way horses do, from the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by biting infected birds.
- 6. CONTROL** – Controlling mosquitoes on and around your property is the best way to minimize WNV infection risk to you and your horses. Mosquitoes need standing water to breed, grow, and mature so eliminating all possible sources of standing water is vital. For example, remove old tires, clean clogged roof gutters, and turn over plastic wading pools or wheelbarrows when not in use.
- 7. PREVENT** – Prevent mosquito bites with barriers like long sleeves and pants and screens on windows and doors. Use proven and safe mosquito repellents according to label directions on both you and your horses.
- 8. TIMING** – Mosquitoes feed mostly from dusk to dawn. Keeping horses indoors then minimizes the risk of exposure during these times.
- 9. NO TREATMENT** – There is no specific anti-viral or curative treatment for horses infected with WNV that develop the most serious neurologic symptoms. In all cases, management of a serious WNV infection involves supportive care overseen by your veterinarian to reduce pain and inflammation.
- 10. INFORMATION** – Like with all important issues, sound information is valuable. Horse owners are always welcome to call the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine and speak with an equine specialist at **509-335-0711**. Reputable information sources for WNV in horses also include:

<https://waddl.vetmed.wsu.edu/animal-disease-faq/west-nile-virus>

<http://agr.wa.gov/news/2017/NR2017-05-15WNVHorseShots.aspx>

<https://pubs.wsu.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=15834&SeriesCode=&CategoryID=168&Keyword=>

<https://aaep.org/horsehealth/west-nile-virus>

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/westnilevirus/>