

**JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**

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**Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus Reported in Two Horses
in Jefferson County**

Watertown, NY – The Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) has been notified by the New York State Department of Health that a horse in the Town of Philadelphia has been diagnosed with West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the third horse reported to have WNV in Jefferson County this year. Another horse, in the Town of Alexandria, is positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). The last report of a horse with EEE in Jefferson County was in August 2022.

WNV is transmitted to humans, horses and some other animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. WNV was first found in New York State in 1999. Jefferson County has also had one human case of WNV reported this year in August – the first positive case in a human in Jefferson County since 2008.

EEE is also transmitted to humans and horses through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is an extremely rare, but serious and often fatal infection. People over the age of 50 and people younger than the age of 15 are at greatest risk for developing severe disease when infected with EEE. From 1971 through 2024, 12 people have been diagnosed with EEE; 7 of those people died. Prior to this year, the last reported cases of EEE were in 2015.

Most people and horses infected with WNV will not develop any signs or symptoms. If symptoms do develop, illness is usually mild. In severe cases, WNV may cause inflammation of the brain or inflammation of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord. People over the age of 50 are at highest risk for severe illness. There is no specific treatment for WNV. Health care providers can help manage symptoms. In severe cases, patients may be hospitalized.

Preventing mosquito bites is important to reduce your risk of mosquito-borne diseases. Take the following steps to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites:

- Cover your skin with clothing (long sleeves and pants) when outdoors when mosquitoes are active
- Apply an EPA-registered insect repellent to exposed skin
- Make sure screens in your windows and doors are intact
- Get rid of standing water around your home where mosquitoes breed

Horse owners should talk with their veterinarian about vaccinations against mosquito-borne infections. For more information on mosquito-borne disease, please visit www.jcphs.org.

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