****

**CONTACT:**

**Jola Szubielski |** **Jola.Szubielski@agriculture.ny.gov** **| 518-457-0752**

**Julia Mason |** **Julia.Mason@agriculture.ny.gov** **| 518-457-0752**

**For Immediate Release: August 26, 2024**

**STATE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT URGES HORSE OWNERS TO VACCINATE THEIR ANIMALS AGAINST DISEASE**

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball today urged horse owners across New York State to vaccinate their horses against Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV), both of which are caused by a virus spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. This is especially important since parts of New York have mosquito activity into late November. So far this year, New York has already seen cases of EEE found in horses in Clinton, Franklin, Saint Lawrence, Washington, Madison, Oneida, Orange, Ulster, Cayuga, and Wayne counties. There has been one confirmed case of WNV in Oswego County. The Department of Agriculture and Markets has made veterinarians across the state aware of these confirmed cases of EEE and WNV.

**Commissioner Ball said,** “A simple vaccination can go a long way toward protecting horses against mosquito-borne diseases. If you’re a horse owner and your horse is in need of a vaccination, I encourage you to make an appointment with your veterinarian as soon as possible.”

Both EEE and WNV are spread by mosquitoes that carry the disease from infected birds. There is no cure for EEE or WNV, which can both be fatal in unvaccinated horses. Owners are urged to ask their veterinarian about recommended vaccines that protect against these viruses. The vaccines are effective for up to one year, but in areas where these diseases occur year round, veterinarians may recommend vaccination every six months. For the vaccine to be effective, it must be handled and administered properly, prior to an anticipated increase in mosquito activity in a local area.

In addition, horse owners are encouraged to use other prevention methods, which include:

1. Eliminating all standing water where mosquitoes can breed;
2. Using insect repellents and following the directions on the label; and
3. Removing animals from mosquito-infested areas during peak biting times, usually dawn and dusk.

Typical symptoms of EEE in equines include staggering, circling, depression, loss of appetite and sometimes fever and blindness. If a horse contracts the WNV, it may show signs of lethargy, weakness in the hind quarters, stumbling, lack of awareness, head tilt and head twitching, convulsions, circling, partial paralysis, and coma. staggering, circling, depression, loss of appetite, fever, and blindness. Horses exhibiting these symptoms should be reported to the State Department of Agriculture and Markets’ Division of Animal Industry at (518) 457-3502 and the local health department right away. Horses suffering from neurologic problems must always be handled with extreme caution, since they may be unpredictable.

While mosquitoes can pass West Nile Virus to humans, horses and other animals, an infected horse cannot spread the disease to other animals. Humans are not susceptible to West Nile by handling a horse that is infected, however the virus is a concern for humans and there are no vaccines for humans. Preventing mosquito bites is the most important way to minimize the threat of this and other mosquito-borne diseases.

There are currently no confirmed cases of either disease in humans in New York. The State Department of Agriculture and Markets works closely with local health departments, as well as the New York State Department of Health (DOH) when incidents of EEE and WNV occur. DOH recently issued this [update](https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2024/2024-08-21_ee_encephalitis.htm).

More information on West Nile Virus, EEE and Rabies Virus in Horses can be found on our website. For more information about preventing West Nile Virus in humans visit the Department of Health.

###