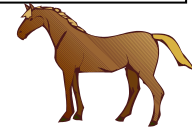




## FACT SHEET: WNV, Dogs, Cats, Horses and Other Animals



West Nile Virus infection has been found in dogs, cats and horses. However, the rate of infection is very low.

- Q. Can infected dogs or cats be carriers for West Nile Virus and give the virus to humans?**  
**A. West Nile Virus is transmitted by infected mosquitoes. There are no known cases of the virus being spread from person to person, animal to animal or from animal to person.**
- Q. How do dogs, cats or horses become infected with West Nile Virus?**  
**A. The same way that humans become infected, by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus is transmitted to the person or animal while the mosquito feeds on blood. The virus then multiplies and may cause illness. Mosquitoes typically become infected when they bite infected birds.**
- Q. Should a dog or cat infected with West Nile Virus be destroyed?**  
**A. No, there is no reason to destroy an animal just because it has been infected with West Nile Virus. Full recovery from the infection is likely.**
- Q. What is the treatment for an animal infected with West Nile Virus?**  
**A. Treatment would be to help with symptoms in the same manner a veterinarian would treat other viral infection.**
- Q. Has West Nile Virus caused severe illness or death in horses?**  
**A. Yes, while data suggests that most horses infected with West Nile Virus recover, results of investigations indicate that West Nile Virus has caused deaths in horses in the United States.**
- Q. How does the virus cause severe illness or death in horses?**  
**A. Following transmission by an infected mosquito, West Nile Virus multiplies in the horse's blood system, crosses the blood brain barrier and infects the brain. The virus interferes with normal central nervous system functioning and causes inflammation of the brain.**
- Q. Can I vaccinate my horse against West Nile Virus infection?**  
**A. A West Nile Virus vaccine for horses was recently approved. Discuss with your veterinarian whether your horse should be vaccinated.**
- Q. How long will a horse infected with West Nile Virus be infectious?**  
**A. We do not know if an infected horse can be infectious (caused by mosquitoes feeding on it to become infected). However, previously published data suggests that the virus is detectable in the blood for only a few days.**

### Infection In Other Animals

Although WNV infections are found most commonly in horses, birds and people, a few other species of animals are at risk for WNV. These animals are bats, cats, dogs, chipmunks, domestic rabbits, pet birds, squirrels, and skunks. Although this may sound alarming to you, there have been a remarkably low number of reports of WNV, which should indicate a strong resistance in these animals. If you have further questions or concerns regarding these animals, contact your local veterinarian. The Department of Agriculture continues to work closely with private veterinarians, Michigan State University and horse owners to detect cases of encephalitis, including WNV in horses. A licensed equine WNV vaccine is available and horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their horses, in consultation with private veterinary practitioners. If you would like to report a case of WNV in domestic animals, such as horses, livestock, or pets, contact Dr. Steve Halstead at (517) 373-1077.

**For More Information Contact or Visit the Following:**

**St. Clair County Health Department 3415 – 28<sup>th</sup> Street Port Huron, MI 48060 (810) 987-5306**  
[www.stclaircounty.org/offices/health/updates.asp](http://www.stclaircounty.org/offices/health/updates.asp)  
[www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus](http://www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)