

## West Nile Virus



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**CAUSE:** West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus.

**EFFECT:** WNV causes encephalitis, which may be fatal, in birds, horses, and humans. Signs in horses include ataxia, muscle weakness, depression, twitching and death.

**How is West Nile Virus spread?** Mosquitoes contract the virus from birds, and then spread the virus to other birds, animals, or humans. Mammals are considered dead-end hosts for the virus, meaning even if infected they are not directly contagious to other mammals.

**How can West Nile Virus be prevented?** Avoid exposure to adult mosquitoes. Eliminate mosquito habitat. (See page 45.)

**Can West Nile Virus affect people?** Yes. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 4156 reported cases of human WNV in 2002, with 284 fatalities.

**What if there is an outbreak?** Currently, there is no treatment for WNV beyond general supportive therapy (hospitalization, intravenous fluids, respiratory assistance, etc.).

**For more information on West Nile virus, see:**

[USDA APHIS: West Nile Virus](#)

[CDC: West Nile Virus](#)

[The Merck Veterinary Manual: West Nile Encephalomyelitis](#)