

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](#)