

West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



304-558-3708

www.agriculture.wv.gov



Facebook: West Virginia Department of Agriculture



Twitter: @WVDeptofAg

NEWS RELEASE
May 27, 2016

Contact: Buddy Davidson
Communications Officer
304/558-3708; 304/541-5932 (cell)
bdavidson@wvda.us

ZIKA VIRUS NO THREAT TO LIVESTOCK, BUT WVDA STILL RECOMMENDS MOSQUITO CONTROL

Charleston, W.Va. – Although the Zika virus has become a major cause of concern for pregnant women, the West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick says there's no reason to believe that livestock are susceptible to the virus.

But that doesn't mean that farmers should ignore mosquito control. Humans and animals are at risk from a number of other mosquito-borne diseases, collectively referred to as arboviruses. Horses are particularly prone to contracting West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE, or "triple-E").

Humans are more likely to contract St. Louis encephalitis and LaCrosse encephalitis, which has infected up to 40 West Virginians in past years. Unlike some other arbovirus of human concern in other areas of the world, such as malaria, these viruses are known to exist in mosquito populations in West Virginia. Although exposure rarely results in serious illness, they can develop into encephalitis, a life-threatening inflammation of the brain. There are no direct treatments for these viruses. Once infected, supportive therapy is the only option.

"The most important thing farmers can do is to eliminate standing water around barns and other places where animals gather and mosquitoes breed. Eliminating poorly draining areas and keeping watering troughs clean can go a long way toward protecting your animals," noted Commissioner Helmick.

He also recommended that people contact their local veterinarians about getting their horses vaccinated against WNV and EEE. The vaccines may also provide some protection for llamas and alpacas, although they have not officially been labeled for use in those animals.

The vaccines require two doses administered three-to-six weeks apart, and take four-to-six weeks from the second dose for optimal effectiveness. It is also recommended that if horses are vaccinated in the spring, a late summer booster should be administered for optimum protection.

Humans should also should reduce standing water near homes and places where children are likely to play. Children are more likely than adults to ignore mosquito bites, and the greater the number of bites, the greater the risk of disease.

When mosquito contact is likely, it is advisable to wear long pants, long sleeves and an insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon, eucalyptus or ir3535. Sunscreen should be applied before insect repellent.

Symptoms of human arbovirus exposure include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and tiredness. Symptoms in animals include neurological symptoms such as a stumbling gait, facial paralysis, drooping or disinterest in their surroundings.

-more-

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health (WVBPH), through a partnership with the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL), is able to submit horse serum specimens for West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) testing.

Veterinarians can contact WVDA's Animal Health Division at 304-558-2214 for more information on submitting samples.

For more information on arboviruses in West Virginia, visit www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Mosquito/Pages/Arbo.aspx.

For more information on the Zika virus, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>.

#