

## WEST NILE VIRUS—THE FUTURE (2009)

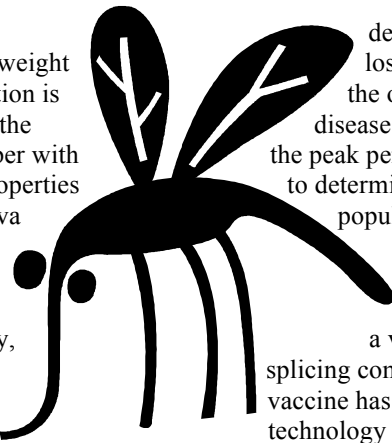
by Robert Morgan, DVM

The number of West Nile Virus (WNV) cases in both our practice area and in California declined significantly between the high water marks of 2004, 2005 and this year. This is also true in the human population. The number of human cases has always greatly surpassed the equine cases in California. Even when California was the epicenter of WNV for horses, the number of cases as a percentage of the horse population was lower than other parts of the country, perhaps due to the lead time we enjoyed in vaccinating our horses.

Although WNV has become endemic in California (a consistent part of the disease profile of horses and humans), it is still uncertain if it will decline to an insignificant level. This is highlighted by data from 2006 which showed large disease spikes in states such as Idaho and Utah (which had few cases in the past) to states such as Texas and Missouri which had gone from epidemics in earlier years to show spikes of equine disease again in 2006. Researchers are now beginning to acknowledge that WNV in the United States is not the benign disease seen previously in other countries.

While the mortality rate in horses is residual problems which can include weight other neurological problems. Prevention is West Nile problem. Mosquitoes pass the primarily in the months of July-October with control agencies can assess equine properties mosquito fish to control mosquito larva

Vaccination is a large part of are currently three West Nile Fort Dodge, Merial, and most recently, vaccine utilizes DNA technology by vaccine virus for Yellow Fever. This There is ongoing work to use similar



devastating (30-40%), survivors can have loss, decreased stamina, incoordination, and the only rationale approach to solving the disease from birds to horses and humans the peak period being August and September. Vector to determine mosquito risk and some may provide populations.

preventing the disease in horses. There vaccines in regular use (developed by a vaccine from Intervet). The newest splicing components of the West Nile virus into the vaccine has been proven safe and effective. technology for a human WNV vaccine.

At this point, our clinic is recommending a once year vaccination against WNV. The strategy is to vaccinate the horse in late winter or spring with West Nile as well as other annual and semi-annual vaccines. All reported cases of West Nile virus disease in horses in northern California have occurred between June and September. While vaccines may not protect all horses for a full 12 months, they will be effective for the critical time of year if given January through June. Visit our website at [www.lbemc.com](http://www.lbemc.com) (“Health” button) for a summary of our vaccine program.

Our Staff is happy to answer your vaccination protocol questions or schedule a vaccination appointment or clinic to meet your needs.