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**FARGO-AREA HORSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS  
State Health Department Offers Recommendations for Protection  
Against Illnesses Spread by Mosquitoes**

BISMARCK, N.D. – In response to the report of West Nile virus in a Fargo-area horse, the North Dakota Department of Health is recommending that residents take normal precautions for protection against illnesses spread by mosquitoes, according to Tracy Miller, epidemiologist with the Department of Health.

According to State Veterinarian Larry Schuler, test results received from Texas A&M University indicated that a horse in the Fargo area had been infected with the virus.

“Since the majority of West Nile virus cases usually appear from July through September, a positive case this early is unusual,” Miller said. “No North Dakota residents have been diagnosed with West Nile encephalitis this year; however, the identification of West Nile virus in a horse is a reminder that the virus is here and we all need to take precautions.”

The Department of Health recommends the following:

- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- When possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outside.
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (e.g., buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep mosquitoes from entering your home by repairing screens in windows and doors.
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.
- Use insect repellent that contains DEET and is approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. (Read all instructions carefully.)

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne infection that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord). Most people infected with diseases transmitted by mosquitoes – including West Nile virus – experience no

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symptoms or have only mild symptoms such as fever and headaches. More severe infection can include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, altered mental state and death. Although the very young and the elderly are more likely to have severe infections, anyone who develops symptoms should consult a physician.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact Tracy Miller or Melissa Casteel, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378. For information about West Nile virus and horses, contact Dr. Larry Schuler, state veterinarian, at 701.328.2655.

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*Please note: Fact sheets and other information about West Nile virus can be accessed at the following websites:*

- *North Dakota Department of Health* – [www.ndwnv.com](http://www.ndwnv.com)
- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- *North Dakota Department of Agriculture* – [www.agdepartment.com](http://www.agdepartment.com)