



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Horse in Champaign County Tests Positive for West Nile Virus

First Mammal in the County to Test Positive for the Disease This Year

Public Health learned this week that a horse in Champaign County has tested positive for the West Nile virus. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, the horse was first reported to state authorities on September 20, and test results were released this week. A bulletin from the health department describes the horse as “symptomatic.” No other details are available.

Horses, like humans, become infected via bites from mosquitoes carrying the West Nile virus. There have been no known cases of transmission of the disease from mammal to mammal, bird to bird, or bird to mammal.

Horse owners may try to prevent infection in their horses with a West Nile virus vaccine. The vaccine, approved in 2001, is available only through veterinarians.

Counts of mosquitoes or animals infected with West Nile in Champaign County this year have been low: Only four batches of mosquitoes have tested positive for the virus, along with two crows and – now – one horse. There have been no cases in Champaign County of West Nile infection in humans this year.

Other counties have been hit much harder. Cook County has reported 1,334 positive mosquito pools and 70 crows and blue jays with West Nile virus. Cook County has had 108 cases of West Nile infection in humans this year. Two people with West Nile in Cook County have died.

Across the state, there have been 175 cases of West Nile in humans. A total of three people have died of the infection. Most of the human cases, and all of the deaths so far in Illinois have been in the northeastern part of the state.

Illinois has the third highest number of human cases of West Nile virus this year in the U.S., behind California and South Dakota.

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