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**For Immediate Release**  
September 6, 2012

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## **BUTTE COUNTY HORSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS**

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Butte County Public Health Department officials have received confirmation that a horse residing in Palermo tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). The horse became symptomatic on August 28, and was subsequently euthanized. This is the first WNV positive horse case in Butte County for 2012. Four human cases of West Nile infection have been confirmed so far this year. There have also been numerous birds and mosquito samples that have tested positive for WNV.

“West Nile Virus is circulating at higher levels than we have seen in years” stated Dr. Mark Lundberg, Butte County Health Officer. “Horses (and people) will be at risk for WNV until the weather turns cool and mosquito season is over. Owners of unvaccinated or partially vaccinated horses are urged to contact their veterinarian. West Nile infection in horses is preventable with the WNV vaccine.”

In horses, WNV can cause inflammation or swelling of the brain and/or spinal cord. Clinical signs in horses may include weakness, lack of coordination, stumbling, circling, falling, muscle tremors, loss of appetite, lethargy, fever, seizures, partial paralysis and coma. If any of these signs are observed in a horse, call a veterinarian immediately. While only 1 percent of humans infected with WNV become seriously ill or die, the disease is fatal in 40 to 50 percent of all horses that contract it. There is no specific treatment for WNV infection in horses, though supportive and symptomatic treatment assists in the recovery of ill horses.

Several WNV vaccine products are available for horses. All products require an initial series of at least two vaccinations, then yearly booster injections. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for humans, so people need to take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Individuals can reduce their risk of WNV by following these prevention tips:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dusk and dawn.
- When outdoors at dusk or dawn, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, sock and shoes.
- Apply insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions.

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- Make sure that household doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

For further information call Butte County Public Health Department at 891-2732 (Chico) or 538-2840 (Oroville), or visit the Butte County Public Health Department website: [www.buttecounty.net/publichealth](http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth). For information on reducing mosquito populations, the public can call Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control at 342-7350 (Chico) or 533-6038 (Oroville), or visit their website at <http://www.bcmvcd.com/>.

Other informative websites on WNV include the following:

- California Department of Public Health: <http://westnile.ca.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>
- California Department of Food and Agriculture: [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal\\_health/wnv\\_info.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health/wnv_info.html)

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### **Butte County Public Health Department**

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.