



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State sees first EEE case of the year *Equine owners encouraged to vaccinate animals*

RALEIGH – A four-year-old quarter horse stallion in Richmond County was euthanized after contracting the first case of Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis in North Carolina this year.

EEE is a mosquito-borne disease that is preventable in equine by vaccination. This is the first case of EEE in North Carolina this year.

EEE causes inflammation or swelling of the brain and spinal cord and is usually fatal. Symptoms include impaired vision, aimless wandering, head pressing, circling, inability to swallow, irregular staggering gait, paralysis, convulsions and death. Once a horse has been bitten by an infected mosquito, it may take three to 10 days for signs of the disease to appear.

“If your horses exhibit any symptoms of EEE, contact your veterinarian immediately,” said State Veterinarian Doug Meckes. “it is imperative that horse owners keep their vaccines current, talk to your veterinarian about vaccinating them as soon as possible against EEE and West Nile virus.”

The vaccinations initially require two shots, 30 days apart, for horses, mules and donkeys that have no prior vaccination history. Meckes recommends a booster shot every six months in North Carolina because of the state’s prolonged mosquito season.

Mosquitoes can breed in any puddle that lasts for more than four days, so removing any source of standing water can reduce the chance of exposing animals to WNV or EEE. Keeping horses in stalls at night, using insect screens and fans and turning off lights after dusk can also help reduce exposure to mosquitoes. Insect repellants can be effective if used according to manufacturers’ instructions.

People, horses and birds can become infected from a bite by a mosquito carrying the diseases, but there is no evidence that horses can transmit the viruses to other horses, birds or people through direct contact.