



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

July 14, 2014

Dear Maryland Veterinarian:

Arboviral surveillance season began on July 1, and we are writing to provide updated guidelines for equine arboviral surveillance in Maryland in 2014 and to remind you that equine neurologic syndromes and any of the equine encephalitides, including West Nile virus (WNV), are reportable to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Animal Health Program. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) offers laboratory testing of equine specimens for WNV and other arboviruses, and we encourage you to make use of this service.

Arboviral disease continues to have an impact on both the human and animal populations in Maryland. Since the emergence of West Nile virus in the State in 1999, there have been 278 human WNV cases, 281 WNV equine cases, and 403 WNV-positive mosquito pools reported in Maryland. Reported equine WNV cases increased from 30 in 2002 to 234 in 2003 and have declined sharply since that time, with three WNV-positive horses in 2012 and one in 2013. Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus was also detected in 2013, in a horse in Worcester County. The state also reported its first WNV-positive camelid, an alpaca, that same year.

As in previous years, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) will work with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to conduct surveillance for arboviral diseases in horses. From July 1 – October 31, 2014, the DHMH Laboratories Administration will accept serum, brain, and/or CSF samples from horses exhibiting clinical signs consistent with arboviral disease for testing.

The lab offers free of charge:

- WNV and EEE polymerase chain reaction (PCR) on brain tissue, and
- WNV IgM capture ELISA on CSF and/or serum samples

Please note the following guidelines:

- For serological testing, the Serological Testing form (DHMH Form 4677) should be completed. The submitter should fill out all required information in the blue section and note any clinical signs under the Arbovirus/West Nile Virus Panel section.
- For culture and viral isolation, the Infectious Agents: Culture/Detection form (DHMH Form 4676) should be used. The submitter should fill out all pertinent information in the yellow section and place the appropriate specimen code in the box next to Arbovirus Panel.
- For both of the above forms, write "EQUINE" across the top of the form.
- Any veterinarian or other individual submitting equine specimens for arboviral testing should complete one or both of the above forms (copies are attached). A separate Testing Form must accompany each specimen.

- Complete contact information must be included, including the owner's address and phone number and the address where the horse is stabled. The specimen will not be tested without this information.
- The form should be completed legibly, preferably using block letters.
- Only specimens from horses exhibiting neurologic signs consistent with arboviral infection will be accepted for testing; the laboratory will not test samples from asymptomatic animals or to determine response to vaccination.
- The Maryland DHMH Laboratories Administration will not accept specimens from horses that are stabled outside of Maryland.
- To request the above laboratory testing forms, please contact the DHMH Laboratories Administration, Outfit Preparation Unit at 410-767-6120. Please limit your request to only the quantity that will meet your immediate needs.
- For questions regarding equine laboratory testing at the DHMH Laboratories Administration, please call 410-767-6153.

In addition to the services offered by the DHMH Laboratories Administration, equine necropsies are also available for a fee at the MDA Frederick Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. The Frederick laboratory can be contacted at 301-600-1548.

As always, regular vaccination of equines against WNV is encouraged. It is also recommended that horses be vaccinated annually against rabies and EEE.

To speak with MDA Animal Health staff or to report neurologic disease in horses, please call (410) 841-5810. To report a neurologic horse after normal business hours, please call 410-841-5971.

Information about arboviral and other infectious diseases in equines is available on the MDA website at www.mda.state.md.us/animal_health/diseases/reportable.php. General information on WNV and other arboviruses is available on the Maryland West Nile Virus web page at <http://phpa.dhmf.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/CZVBD/SitePages/west-nile.aspx> and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile.

If you have any other questions or concerns or would like general information about WNV, please contact the Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases at (410) 767-5649.

Sincerely,



Katherine A. Feldman, DVM, MPH
State Public Health Veterinarian
DHMH/CZVBD




Robert Myers, PhD
Director
DHMH Laboratories Administration

Guy Hohenhaus, DVM, MPH
State Veterinarian
MDA Animal Health

cc:

David Blythe, MD, MPH, Acting Director, Infectious Disease Bureau
Maria P. Carlos, PhD, DVM, Chief, Virology and Immunology, Laboratories Administration