

WEST NILE VIRUS IN PETS



Clinical signs associated with West Nile virus infection in dogs, cats, domestic rabbits, and domestic birds have not been well described. It appears that these animals may be infected, but rarely develop clinical signs of disease. There were less than 40 dogs and 1 one cat reported infected with WNV to CDC during 2003. Experimentally infected dogs showed no symptoms after infection with WNV, while some experimentally infected cats exhibited mild, non-specific symptoms during the first week after infection, such as low grade fever and lethargy.

There is no documented evidence of person-to-person or animal-to-person transmission of WNV. Because WNV is transmitted by infectious mosquitoes, dogs or cats could be exposed to the virus in the same way humans become infected. Veterinarians should take normal infection control precautions when caring for an animal suspected to have this or any viral infection. It is possible that dogs and cats could become infected by eating dead infected animals such as birds or mice. Studies have shown that cats have become infected with the virus after eating infected mice, but they generally do not show any sign of illness.

Do **NOT** use DEET-based repellents on pets. Animals tend to lick themselves and ingest the product, potentially causing health problems. Use species-appropriate repellent products. Ask your veterinarian which products are most likely to be both safe and effective.

There is currently no vaccine approved for use in dogs and cats, and there is no specific treatment for WNV infection. Treatment is supportive and consistent with standard veterinary practice for animals with a viral infection. There is no reason to destroy an animal just because it is infected with WNV. Full recovery from the infection is likely. Please visit with your veterinarian for additional information.



North Dakota State Board of Animal Health

600 East Boulevard Ave. Dept. 602 Bismarck, ND 58505 Phone: (701) 328-2655

<http://www.agdepartment.com/Programs/Livestock/BOAH/WestNile.htm>