



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS CONFIRMED IN NORTHEAST OHIO HORSES**

*Disease spread by mosquitoes is preventable in horses with proper vaccination*

REYNOLDSBURG, OH (Sept. 23, 2014) – Ohio Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey today confirmed at least four cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in horses in Ashtabula and Trumbull Counties and is urging horse owners to contact their veterinarian to ensure the animal's EEE vaccine and boosters are up to date.

“The most effective way to prevent EEE in horses is to have the animal vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian,” said Dr. Forshey. “Taking steps to manage the mosquito population, such as eliminating standing water, will also aid in the prevention of EEE and other vector-borne viruses that cause illness in horses and in people.”

The virus responsible for EEE is transmitted to horses by mosquitoes and attacks the animal's central nervous system. In horses, onset is abrupt and usually fatal. Symptoms include unsteadiness, erratic behavior, a marked loss of coordination and seizures. Horses are particularly susceptible but the virus can also cause serious illness in people as well as other animals such as poultry and deer.

Because EEE can also be transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes, animals sick from EEE are a sign that people should also take steps to guard themselves against mosquitoes by applying repellent and wearing protective clothing. The disease is very rare in humans, and only a few cases are reported in the United States each year. There are no confirmed human cases associated with this outbreak in Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture is working with the Ohio Department of Health and local health officials to monitor the outbreak. Suspect horse cases should be reported to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Citizens who are concerned about an illness should contact their physician.

For more information on EEE, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/EasternEquineEncephalitis/gen/qa.html>

– 30 –

*Media Contact:*

*Erica Hawkins, Ohio Department of Agriculture, 614-752-9817*

