

West Nile Virus cases very rare in dogs, cats

Dear Doctors,
I recently read a newspaper account of a dog in Illinois who died from West Nile Virus. Since this is the first time I have heard of a dog dying from West Nile Virus, could you provide more information about this virus in dogs and cats? Can West Nile Virus pass back and forth between people and pets, or vice versa?



Ask the Vets
Michael & Tracy Jaffe

The majority of deaths from WNV have been reported in horses, birds and people.

The dog in Illinois who died from WNV was an 8-year-old, mixed breed dog. He may have also been suffering from another disease, thus making his immune system more susceptible to infections. This dog showed signs of neurologic disease such as head bobbing, lethargy and progressive weakness.

Since this disease is so rare in dogs and cats, the specific clinical signs of the infection aren't well known.

If dogs or cats contract the virus, the majority probably won't show obvious signs of illness. Dogs and cats are suspected to have a low risk of

contracting West Nile Virus. Although there have been multiple, well-publicized reports of illness and death in some of the horses, birds and people infected with West Nile Virus, we don't anticipate that we will see widespread illness and death in dogs and cats should they become infected with the virus.

Will there be more cases reported? We hope not, but only time will tell.

Encephalitis, an inflammatory condition of the brain, is the principal disease caused by WNV.

In horses, the most common sign is weakness in the hindquarters. Clinical signs in birds are relatively unknown, since most infected birds are found dead. Infected squirrels have been described as showing signs of pain, vocalizing, running in circles, biting their paws and falling from trees.

CARRIERS

West Nile Virus isn't a new disease. It was first identified

in 1937 in the West Nile district of Uganda. It has since been isolated in animals around the world.

The virus is transmitted by mosquito through the blood of infected birds, which are the primary reservoir hosts of WNV. The mosquito can transmit the virus to people and animals by eating mosquitoes. The virus has also been identified as carriers of the virus; however, no reports document that ticks can transmit the virus to other people or animals.

We aren't aware of any report of direct transmission of WNV from people to animal, animal to people, or animal to animal.

It is conceivable that dogs and cats can become infected with WNV if they eat infected animals or receive a blood transfusion or an organ transplant from an infected animal, but we aren't aware of any reports of this occurring.

Vaccines for dogs and cats aren't available because the virus isn't considered to cause

clinical illness in dogs and cats. Unless a significant number of dogs and cats become seriously ill from being infected with WNV, there will most likely not be an incentive for vaccine manufacturers to develop a vaccine for companion animals.

A vaccine is available to help prevent WNV in horses. We don't recommend using this vaccine in companion animals.

The "horse" vaccine is, however, being used in some exotic bird species, zebras and tapirs housed in zoos.

PREVENTION

How can you help ensure that your dog and cat remain at low risk for becoming infected with West Nile Virus? One of the best means of prevention is to reduce the risk of mosquito bites.

Keep your pets away from stagnant water, and limit their time spent outdoors at dusk and at dawn, when mosquitoes are most active. Check your

window screens for holes and repair them to limit entry of mosquitoes into your home. Please don't apply insect repellents that contain DEET to your dog's or cat's coat, because your pet may lick it off and become sick. Don't permit your pet to eat wildlife.

If you suspect your pet is ill because of West Nile Virus - which at this point we think would be quite unlikely - your veterinarian should examine your pet. Blood or tissue samples can be submitted to a special laboratory to help determine if your pet has WNV.

It isn't believed that an outbreak of West Nile Virus is imminent in our companion animals, so please don't panic! We will keep you posted if we learn of new developments in West Nile Virus affecting companion pets.

Send questions to be addressed in this column by mail in care of Mary Klemic, At Home Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Or e-mail askthetvets@juno.com

Furniture contest winners to go on 'Fabulous' shopping spree

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and area merchants teamed up to send lucky winners on home furnishings shopping sprees.

Our winners received a \$1,000 gift certificate to shop at participating stores.

The winners are: Tom Lenhart of Royal Oak won a certificate to Avenue Gallery (with Birmingham, Rochester, Ann Arbor and

Novi locations); Doreen Speight of Northville to Classic Interiors (Livonia); Linda Pasternak of Oakland to Woven Treasures (Birmingham); Anne Schuster of Westland to Wm. C. Franks Furniture (Wayne); Lila Silagi of Canton to Laurel Furniture (downtown Plymouth); Karen Foster of Westland to N.A. Mans Building Center (Canton Township); M.J. Rao of Farmington Hills to Newton

Furniture (Bloomfield Hills, Livonia, Novi and Sterling Heights locations); Sue Bertels of Lake Orion, Pine Tree Lighting (Lake Orion), Cori Ricbow of Auburn Hills to Reelchic (Waterford); Christine Ulrich Bloomfield Hills; Watch Hill Home Interiors (Birmingham); and Blonely Hester of Southfield to Walker Buzenberg (Plymouth).

HOLIDAY

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tiny boas.

Decor delights are everywhere, such as the giant round topiaries in lime and purple. Garland is draped on headboards and chandeliers, ribbons and greenery are wrapped on a chandelier.

Among the other areas and rooms that will be open this year - either for the first time, or for the first time in many years - are the nursery kitchen (featuring Frances' tea set, her name on each cup, displayed in a cabinet) and the vault in Mrs. Wilson's study.

The many personal items that will be shown include



JOHN STORMZ/AND OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Elegant holiday decorations fill the rooms at Meadow Brook Hall, such as these giant topiaries.

fashions and accessories, photographs, a table set for high tea, toys and games, Frances' equestrian trophies, invitations, newspaper clippings, travel souvenirs, postcards, and pieces from Matilda Dodge Wilson's collection of compacts.

The Holiday Walk will begin in Matilda Dodge Wilson's study, where she worked on her business, political and charitable activities, and end in

an area where visitors will find a cafe and A Holiday Shop. The latter, presented by the Meadow Brook Hall Garden Club, will feature individually made fresh and artificial holiday arrangements and swags.

"When you come to the end of the tour we're not pushing you out the door," Victor said.

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