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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cache County Mosquito Abatement District

March 10, 2026

Horse Owners Urged to Vaccinate Now Against West Nile Virus

Cache County Mosquito Abatement is encouraging all horse owners to vaccinate their horses now against West Nile virus before mosquito season begins across Northern Utah.

Spring time is the best time to vaccinate horses so they develop strong immunity before mosquito populations peak later in the season.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. While many horses exposed to the virus may not show symptoms, unvaccinated horses are at significant risk for serious illness. The virus can attack the nervous system and may cause stumbling, muscle tremors, weakness, inability to stand, paralysis, and in some cases, death. There is no specific cure once a horse becomes infected, making prevention critical.

"Vaccination is safe, effective, and far less costly than treating a very sick horse," said Dr. Echols, a veterinarian who also serves on the Bear River Health Department's Board of Health. "Every year veterinarians see preventable cases of West Nile virus in unvaccinated horses. A simple vaccine now can spare owners heartbreak later in the summer. Vaccination requires an initial series of two doses given 30 days apart and a yearly booster which is why horse owners should consider scheduling vaccinations now. Mosquito control is also an important tool. Removing any standing water, manure, and containers that collect water helps protect people and horses from mosquito exposure."

Horse owners should contact their veterinarian to schedule vaccinations and ensure horses are up to date. In addition to vaccination, owners are encouraged to reduce mosquito habitat around barns and properties by eliminating standing water and using approved repellents when appropriate.

For more information about mosquito prevention and West Nile virus activity in Cache County, visit cachemosquito.gov or contact Cache Mosquito Abatement District at 435-764-6839.