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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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HORSEMEN MUST BE MINDFUL OF WEST NILE VIRUS

SACRAMENTO, CA – Given the prevalence of West Nile Virus in California, equine health authorities are encouraging horsemen to consult with their veterinary practitioners about continuing to vaccinate horses in the state.

Equine health officials at UC Davis, including Dr. Ronald Jensen, the CHRB equine medical director, have been advising owners, trainers, breeders, and veterinarians in the California horse-racing industry about the benefits of vaccinations since 2002 – long before the first case of West Nile Virus was reported in the state. With the cooperation of the Thoroughbred Owners of California, a series of free seminars was conducted for the racing industry in the winter of 2003.

“Largely as a result of this ongoing effort, a majority of the horses at California racetracks is believed to have been vaccinated against the disease,” said Dr. Jensen. “These vaccinations are effective in protecting the horse.

“The rapid spread of West Nile Virus throughout California and the discovery of dead birds infected with the disease at Santa Anita Park and Los Alamitos is a reminder that we can’t ease up. There are probably some horses at racetracks and breeding farms that have not been vaccinated. And even those horses that have been vaccinated require booster shots each year. Horsemen should consult with their veterinarians about what they should do to guard against this disease.”

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