

For Immediate Release

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Vaccinate Your Horse, Cattle for Rabies Before Leaving for Events

Help protect other competitors, animals from this deadly disease

Duluth, Ga., May 27, 2009 — Before you hit the show circuit this season, be sure to do your part to keep horses, other animals and competitors safe by including a rabies vaccination at your pre-event health exam. Vaccinations can do more than just help horses — they can help protect horse owners from disease, too.

“Owners sometimes forget diseases that affect their horses or cattle may also affect anyone that has contact with their animal,” says April Knudson, DVM, manager, Veterinary Services, Merial. “In fact, cattle or horses infected with some diseases, like rabies, can potentially expose their human handlers, veterinary professionals or even spectators at an event or show.”¹

In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notified more than 150,000 people who attended the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration of potential rabies exposure after a case was confirmed during the event. Although no human cases resulted, thousands of people were at risk.²

More recently, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services notified people that attended the 2008 Missouri State Fair of possible rabies exposure when a horse shown at the fair died from a confirmed case of rabies.³

Transmitted through the saliva of infected animals — including common wildlife like skunks, raccoons, foxes and bats — rabies is 100 percent fatal for horses and other animals, and nearly always fatal for humans.¹

“You may not even be aware that animals are infected until it’s too late,” Dr. Knudson says. “It can be hard to tell if horses or cattle have been bitten by an infected animal as the wound may be very small.”⁴ Additionally, rabies can be very difficult to diagnose because the disease can display a wide array of clinical signs.”⁵

(more)

Clinical signs of rabies can include depression, lack of coordination and aggressive behavior,¹ or more obscure signs, such as lameness or colic.⁵

“Being away from stable mates and the noise and activity of horse shows or events may cause some horses to be nervous or upset, making it even more difficult to recognize rabies,” Dr. Knudson says. “What’s more, if a horse has been infected, any person that comes in contact with that horse — whether it’s the horse owner or a person attending the event or show — could be in danger of contracting the disease.”

Currently, there are no documented cases of horse-to-human rabies transmission,¹ but the danger still exists, Dr. Knudson adds.

Dr. Knudson says horse owners should ask their veterinarian about a vaccine that is not only proven to be effective, but also protects horses quickly and has a long duration of immunity.

IMRAB[®] Brand Vaccines are trusted and proven for rabies prevention with more than 400 million doses sold and more than 20 years of use. IMRAB is approved for use in six species and is available in combination with Equine POTOMAVAC[™] + IMRAB to help prevent Potomac horse fever and rabies.

“It’s incredibly important to be sure horses are vaccinated against rabies,” Dr. Knudson adds. “Vaccinating horses for rabies can help to keep everyone from horse owner to spectator safe.”

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¹Marteniuk J. Rabies in horses. Michigan State University, College of Veterinary Medicine. Available at: <http://old.cvm.msu.edu/extension/equine/RabiesinHorses.pdf>. Accessed March 15, 2009.

²Centers for Disease Control. Horse stabled at Tennessee Walking Horse 2006 National Celebration tested positive for rabies. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/news/2006-09-09_horse.html. Accessed March 15, 2009.

³Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Horse shown at state fair tested positive for rabies. Available at: <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/NewsAndPublicNotices/2008/StateFairHorse8-22.08.html>. Accessed March 15, 2009.

⁴Green SL. Rabies. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Equine Practice* 1997; 13(1): 1-11.

⁵Weese JS. A review of equine zoonotic diseases: risks in veterinary medicine. *AAEP Proceedings* 2002; 48: 362-369.