

Other Animal Surveillance

Peel Public Health relies mainly on the testing of crows and mosquitoes to determine the presence and location of the WN virus in Peel Region. Evidence of WNV infection has been found in many wild and domestic animals, including dogs, cats, and squirrels. However, the risk of these other species developing clinical disease from the infection appears to be very low. While many other animal species can become infected with the virus, only results on infected horses are collected and reported by Health Canada. In horses the disease is severe, with up to 30% of horses infected with the virus either dying or having to be euthanized.²⁷ As part of the provincial West Nile Virus surveillance system, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food works with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, veterinarians, and private laboratories in the collection of data on WNV-infected horses. The tracking of infected horses is another resource tool local health units can use for locating the virus in Ontario and across Canada. Peel experienced its first WNV-infected horse in 2003 when a horse in the Inglewood area of Caledon tested positive.²⁸ There were no WNV-positive horses found in Peel during 2004.²⁹

In Ontario, there has been steady decline in the number of presumed or confirmed cases in horses since 2002, when there were 101 presumed or confirmed cases reported.³⁰ A total of nine confirmed cases for 2004 were documented (Table 13). This represents a significant decline from 2003 when there were 41 presumptive or confirmed horses in Ontario.²⁸

Table 13: Horse Surveillance for West Nile Virus by Health Unit, Ontario, 2004

Region	Date of First Case	Date of Last Case	Status
County of Brant	October 12	October 12	1 confirmed
County of Elgin	October 4	October 4	1 confirmed
Region of Durham	October 12	October 12	1 confirmed
County of Lambton	September 30	September 30	1 confirmed
District of Nipissing	August 20	September 13	3 confirmed
District of Muskoka	September 8	September 8	1 confirmed
District of Sudbury	August 26	August 26	1 confirmed

Total: 9 confirmed

Data as of January 5, 2005

Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food

URL: http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/livestock/horses/facts/wnv_surv2004.htm

Across Canada, a total of 13 confirmed cases of WNV illness in horses were recorded in 2004, with nine cases in Ontario and four cases in Alberta.³¹ The low level of WNV illness in horses across Canada may be due to the use of a vaccine to protect horses from the disease which has been available since September 2001. The vaccine available for use on horses is not licensed for use on other species. These low numbers may be due to the decreased testing for WNV in horses as veterinarians are more experienced in recognizing WNV clinical symptoms in addition horse owners may be reluctant to pay for testing.