OTHER ANIMAL SURVEILLANCE

Wild birds are the predominant host animal for WNV; however, the virus can also infect amphibians, domestic poultry, domestic mammals (especially horses), and apes and monkeys.[10]

A vaccine manufactured in the United States has been available in Canada since September 2001 to protect horses from disease caused by WNV. Initially allowed for use under an "emergency use permit system", the vaccine was licensed and registered for use in Canada as of February 2003.[41] Numbers of infected horses would be expected to decline in the future with increased use of this vaccine.

As part of the provincial West Nile Virus surveillance, led by the MOHLTC, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food works with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Health Canada and private laboratories in the collection and presentation of Ontario equine case data.[42]

In Canada, a total of 445 positive results were reported to the CFIA in 2003, as per the Immediately Notifiable Disease Regulations.[43] Many of the positive results reported to the CFIA are positive results to IgG detection only, with or without neurological clinical signs. In some cases, the information available to the CFIA does not mention whether the horses had clinical signs or not or if the animal had been vaccinated or not against WNV. They are reported and counted as "presumptive positives" on the Health Canada website, but some of these positive IgG results could probably be explained by vaccination or by a previous exposure.

The data must be interpreted with caution, since the total number of animals reported with at least one positive test does not necessarily represent the total number of "cases" of WNV.[43] In addition, as veterinarians feel more confident in their ability to diagnose WNV on clinical grounds, some horse owners may be reluctant to pay for WNV tests done on an already sick animal.

The first equine case of WNV in Peel occurred in the Inglewood area of Caledon on July 17, 2003.[42] This is the first horse to have ever tested positive or presumptive positive for West Nile Virus in the Region. There were no other reports of WNV infection in animals such as horses, dogs or cats in the Region of Peel in 2003.

WNV activity was also reported among horses in other Ontario health units in 2003, including one confirmed positive horse in each of Durham, Eastern Ontario, Halton, Perth, and Windsor (Appendix G). In addition, there was one probable and one confirmed equine case of WNV in Windsor, and two confirmed cases in Niagara.[44] Peterborough County-City Health Unit also had one equine case that was either presumptive or confirmed positive for WNV.[43] As of January 12, 2004 in total there were

41 presumptive or confirmed positive horses in Ontario health units for the 2003 season, 31 for which the health unit was unknown.[43] This compares to 101 confirmed and six probable equine cases in 18 different health units in 2002.[45]