First encephalomyelitis case found here

One positive case, so far, of equine encephalomyelitis, has been diagnosed by an Evangeline Parish veterinarian.

Dr. Armand Corell said he has had one case here, near the Turkey Creek area, of a horse with the disease.

The disease has also affected parts of St. Landry Parish as well.

Viral encephalomyelitis of horses is a group of closely related diseases of Equidae which are transmitted by arthropods (insects), and which cause moderate to high mortality after presenting clinical signs of dysfunction of the nervous system.

They are caused by Alphavirus (family Togaviridae), of which three strains are commonly recognized: Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE), Western Equine Encephalomyelitis (WEE), and Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis (VEE).

Human infection can occur, and the disease is of significant public health importance.

In North America the disease tends to be seasonal due to the changes in mosquito and other insect populations. Spread of the disease between areas by migratory birds may be possible, and encephalitis has been detected in infected birds.

Wild birds act as a reservoir for the virus, and spread is by insects. Mosquitoes appear to be the main vector, but mites, ticks, and lice may also be implicated. The movement of infected mosquitoes between distant areas by high winds has been recorded. Rodents and other small mammals may serve as viral reservoirs for VEE.

Clinical signs with the different virus are indistinguishable. The incubation period may be 1-3 weeks after which there is a mild loss of appetite, low fever and depression. The animals may initially be hypersensitive to external stimuli, with periods of excitement and restlessness. Animals may circle and appear blind, or exhibit tremors. The disease progresses to a non-responsive "dummy" state, or to increasing paralysis.

Vaccines for WEE and EEE are available. Control of flies and insects, with provision of screened housing and control of access to wild bird populations help minimize risk of exposure.