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***** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

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(not for publication)

Agricultural Commissioner Recommends Horse Owners
Take Precautions Against West Nile Virus

San Joaquin County

August 5, 2009—The San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner's Office announced today, a West Nile Virus (WNV) horse fatality is the first in San Joaquin County for 2009. Although the Agricultural Commissioner recommends all horses receive the WNV vaccine, the horse had not previously been vaccinated.

"It is extremely important horse owners vaccinate their horses against this disease", stated San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner Scott Hudson. "The vaccine has proven to be highly effective in protecting horses from contracting West Nile Virus."

Not every horse exposed to West Nile Virus (WNV) will develop the clinical signs of the disease. Of those that do, signs include stumbling, staggering, wobbly gait or incoordination, circling, hind limb weakness, inability to stand, muscle twitching, paralysis or acute death. According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, one in four affected horses will develop a fever. Between 20 and 40 percent of the horses that develop clinical symptoms either die or have to be euthanized.

Hudson said, "Reducing or eliminating your horse's exposure to mosquitoes is crucial to protecting them from WNV. Eliminate mosquito breeding sites by cleaning horse watering containers weekly. Be sure to clear standing water from containers, wheelbarrows, and old tires. Keep ponds aerated and stocked with mosquitofish which are free and available through the San Joaquin County Mosquito & Vector Control District. Keep swimming pools clean and covered, and schedule irrigation to minimize standing water. Other ways to minimize your horse's exposure to mosquitoes is to stable horses at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, utilize fans, barrier cloth, flysheets, repellents, and insecticide misting systems."

For information on vaccinations, horse owners should contact their local veterinarian.

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