



4-H & Youth

4-H Volunteer Forum

The 2002 Nebraska State 4-H Volunteer Forum will be held Feb. 15-16 in Grand Island. This forum is a conference developed by a committee of 4-H volunteers from across the state. Network with other 4-H leaders, exchange successful 4-H programs among 4-H leaders and be introduced to new areas and projects. There will be numerous workshops offering hands-on learning experiences and new ideas and programs designed to enhance your club. Contact Tracy at 441-7180 for more information. (TK)

4-H Club Officer Training

Mark your calendars now for the upcoming 4-H Club Officer Training. All 4-H members are encouraged to attend! Everyone will discover how to conduct a meeting and use parliamentary procedure. 4-H members will also have an opportunity to participate in a mock meeting Sunday, March 3, 6:30-8 p.m. 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln. (TK/DK)

4-H Bulletin Board

- Teen Council will meet Sunday, Feb. 10 from 3-5 p.m.
- Pet Pals Small Animal Club will meet Tuesday, Feb. 12 at 6:45 p.m.
- Lancaster County Horse VIPS will meet Wednesday, Feb. 13 at 7 p.m.
- Plan to attend the Rabbit VIPS will meet Thursday, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m.



4-H Cat Club Reorganizing

Do you have a cat? Do you want to know about taking care of it? The Lancaster County 4-H Cat Club is just the place for you! Join us for an evening of fun!

What: Lancaster County 4-H Cat Club

When: Tuesday, Feb. 12 at 7 p.m.

Where: Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln.

For more information, call Arlene at 441-7180.

Speech Workshop

Come one ... come all ... to the 2002 4-H Speech Workshop, Sunday, Feb. 10 from 6-7:30 p.m. This workshop will help all ages of 4-H members to write and deliver speeches and public service announcements.

Parents and leaders are encouraged to attend, to find out more about the contest, and to become prepared to assist the youth in their development. We hope to see you there! (DK/TK)

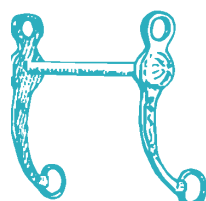
Leather Workshop

Lancaster County is implementing a 4-H Leather Project! This county-only project is designed to allow youth to explore leather craftsmanship. Attend a Feb. 21 workshop at 7 p.m. and learn the basic history of leather, leather tools, the principles of good design and go home with a simple leather project. **RSVP by Feb. 15** by calling 441-7180. Mark your calendars for Workshop II, Saturday, March 16 at 9:30 a.m. (TK)

Spring Rabbit Clinic & Show

The Lancaster County 4-H Spring Rabbit Clinic will be held Thursday, March 14, 6:30-9 p.m., at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. We will cover many topics including showmanship, static exhibits, grooming and care of your animal.

We will follow with a 4-H Rabbit Show at 9 a.m., Saturday, March 16, in the Small Animal Building at the Lancaster Event Center. Mark your calendars and look for a flyer in next month's NEBLINE.



HORSE BITS

NU's Veterinary Diagnostic Center on Lookout for West Nile Virus

West Nile virus is expected to make its way to Nebraska by spring of 2002, and the University of Nebraska's Veterinary Diagnostic Center is gearing up to track the virus.

West Nile is a mosquito-borne virus that has existed for many years in the Middle East, West Asia and Africa. It was first reported in the United States in 1999, spread along the East Coast in 2000 and made its way to the Midwest this year, with cases documented in Wisconsin, Iowa and Missouri.

The virus can infect people, birds and some mammals, including horses. Most people who are infected don't become ill. When symptoms occur, they range from those of a mild flu to encephalitis in severe cases. Less than one percent of severe cases are fatal, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information.

"One of the main reasons we are concerned about West Nile virus is

because it is an exotic disease," said David Steffen, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources veterinarian and director of NU's Veterinary Diagnostic Center. "It's important for us to track this disease as it spreads across the continent, and to alert the public and to minimize the risk of infection. If we know where the virus is, we can try to help minimize its impact by vaccinating horses and by mosquito control."

Often, the first sign of West Nile virus in a region is unusual bird die-offs, particularly crows. Crows and blue jays are unusually susceptible to the virus and crows may feed on other birds that have died, Steffen said. Other birds, such as sparrows, replicate virus and spread infection but will not become ill.

"We have run a few negative tests this year for West Nile virus but we expect to see many more potential cases in the spring when mosquitoes become active again," he said. The Veterinary Diagnostic Center has purchased equipment to safely handle infected birds and to run tests which identify viral

genetic material without requiring scientists to handle live virus.

West Nile virus does not affect most livestock species except horses. Dogs and cats are rarely infected.

"Quite a few horses have been infected as the virus has spread across the country," Steffen said. Many equine infections are subclinical, but there is a 40 percent death rate in clinically infected horses.

Steffen recommends that horse owners have their horses vaccinated against West Nile virus.

"There have been 55 diagnosed cases in humans in New York, and seven of those people died," Steffen said. In 2000, there were 21 human cases of West Nile virus in the United States and two deaths, according to the CDC. "So people who fall into one of the risk categories, elderly or immuno-suppressed, will want to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes by wearing repellent and long sleeves."

Horses and humans are dead-end carriers of the disease, he said,

meaning the infection is not contagious when present in those species.

Nebraska residents can help the center monitor the progress of the virus by reporting dead birds to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or local public health authorities.

"Nebraska Game and Parks will assist in safely getting the dead birds to the Veterinary Diagnostic Center for Testing," Steffen said. "If it is necessary for someone to handle a dead bird, they should use gloves, put the bird into a plastic bag and handle it as little as possible."

Reporting bird mortality will help public health monitors identify infection hot spots which can be sprayed to reduce mosquito numbers and minimize the risk to humans.

"This is not something to be scared of but something to be aware of," Steffen said. "Because the virus is new, we may see more cases this first year. But once it spreads, there will be more natural immunity and fewer cases in the future." (EK)