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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Equine Virus Found in Central and Northwest Ohio Counties**

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Oct. 17, 2007) – Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) officials today confirmed the discovery of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus -- a mosquito-borne viral disease -- in a central-Ohio horse and a northwest-Ohio horse. These cases, found in Orient and Harrod, mark the first in Ohio since 2005, when a case was reported in Trumbull County.

The virus, which is spread through infected mosquitoes, can be fatal to horses if they are not properly vaccinated. Dr. Tony Forshey, ODA state veterinarian, urges equine owners to vaccinate their animals.

“Horses are highly susceptible to EEE, and vaccination can be an effective tool in combating this deadly virus. Horse owners should take all necessary precautions, including the implementation of good mosquito control.”

The ODA Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Reynoldsburg confirmed EEE in both Ohio horses. The virus, which has been found in several surrounding states, is most commonly spread in and around freshwater hardwood swamps in the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states as well as in the Great Lakes region. The virus can be fatal to horses, causing death within two to three days of onset.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), human cases occur relatively infrequently, largely because the primary transmission cycle takes place in and around swampy areas where human populations tend to be limited. However, humans should avoid mosquito bites by employing personal and household protection measures, such as using an EPA-registered repellent according to manufacturers' instructions, wearing protective clothing, avoiding outdoor activities when mosquitoes are active, and removing standing water that can provide mosquito breeding sites.

For more information regarding the EEE virus, visit the CDC Web Site at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/arbor/eeefact.htm> .

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