

Title: Federal funding for West Nile virus surveillance, research, and control

Statement of the problem:

West Nile virus infection in the Western Hemisphere was first recognized in the New York area in 1999. In 2000, it spread to 12 states and the District of Columbia. The fiscal impact on local and state jurisdictions has been in the millions of dollars, and required massive reordering of public health priorities and resources in the affected areas. To date, the sole funding source for WNV has been supplementation of emerging infectious disease or electronic laboratory capacity grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to state health departments. This funding has been targeted primarily at WNV surveillance. Although CDC recently released additional funds for WNV research that includes other potential agencies, other federal agencies have not yet released funding for other potential applicants. In addition to state and local health agencies, such applicants should include zoologic societies for surveillance and research due to the closely supervised veterinary care and good diagnostic methods, veterinary diagnostic laboratories for WNV testing if animals are to be used as sentinels of disease, agriculture agencies for monitoring the impact of WNV on horses and other domestic animals, and for reducing the economic impact of the disease, universities for research into the biology, pathogenesis, and transmission of the disease, university extension departments for research into appropriate educational interventions, and mosquito control and environmental agencies for research into safe and effective control methods. Finally, the infrastructure for arbovirus surveillance, research, and control has been depleted, so the introduction of WNV and the possibility of the introduction of additional new arboviruses should be utilized to focus attention on this issue.

Desired action:

Additional federal agencies besides the CDC should identify potential sources of funding for WNV surveillance, research, and control that are open to multiple types of public and private agencies.

Fiscal and Impact Statement:

Fiscal: Federal agencies will need to identify current sources of funding that can be redirected to WNV and/or arboviral surveillance, research, and control, or will need to work with Congress to establish new sources of funding.

Impact: Additional sources of funding will likely increase the knowledge and ability to control WNV and other arboviruses.

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Agency for Response:

United States Department of Agriculture
National Science Foundation
National Institutes of Health
United States Department of the Interior

Agencies for Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention