

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

Bird Tests Positive for West Nile Virus in Dane County

Officials Encourage Precautions against Mosquito Bites

Madison WI – June 9, 2014 - PHMDC (Public Health – Madison and Dane County) and state health officials announced that a bird recently tested positive for West Nile virus in Dane County, the first to do so in the county this year. Although very few mosquitoes actually carry West Nile virus, infected birds serve as an early warning by indicating that the virus is present in the area. This means that people should pay more attention to protecting themselves against mosquito bites.

Increasing risk of WNV infection in humans may be preceded by a spike in sick or dead birds so it is important for people to continue reporting sick or dead birds that they find to the Dead Bird Hotline 1-800-433-1610.

West Nile virus is spread to people and horses through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected with West Nile virus by biting infected birds and then potentially transmit the virus by biting other animals or people.

Peak mosquito season is just getting started, so it is very important to take the necessary steps to avoid bites and help reduce potential exposure to the West Nile virus infection. Here are a few important steps to take to help avoid bites:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing as well as exposed skin because mosquitoes are capable of biting through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquitoes from getting into your house.
- Trim tall grass, weeds and vines because mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- **ELIMINATE SOURCES OF STANDING WATER BY**
 - Getting rid of items that can hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or discarded tires. Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats and canoes when not in use. Water left in these items provides breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
 - Cleaning roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage – again to avoid standing water.
 - Changing the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
 - Cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; draining water from pool covers.
 - Landscaping to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

The chances of a person becoming infected with the West Nile virus are very low and most infected people will not have any symptoms. Those who do become ill typically develop a fever, headache, and rash that lasts a few days. Symptoms may begin between three to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Older adults and people with compromised immune systems are at an increased risk of severe disease from the virus and can develop neurologic illness such as meningitis, seizures, and paralysis. There is no specific treatment for West Nile virus other than to treat symptoms. If you think you have a West Nile virus infection, contact your healthcare provider.

Statewide monitoring activities for West Nile virus began May 1st. Horse owners should contact their veterinarian to get their horse vaccinated or if they suspect their horse is ill.

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of West Nile virus since 2001 among wild birds, horses, mosquitoes and people. Since 2002, there were 234 human cases (confirmed and suspected) of West Nile virus statewide, with 23 reported in Dane County. Four cases were reported in 2013.

For more information on West Nile virus:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/ArboviralDiseases/WestNileVirus/>

<http://www.publichealthmdc.com/disease/westNile/>