

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Public Health - Madison & Dane County**

#### **(PHMDC)**

### **Bird Tests Positive for West Nile Virus in Dane County**

#### **This Sign of West Nile Virus Highlights Importance of Protecting yourself against Mosquito Bites**

Madison WI – June 23, 2015 - PHMDC along with state health officials announced that a bird recently tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) in Dane County, the first to do so in the county this year. Although very few mosquitoes actually carry WNV, the disease is spread to people and horses through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected with WNV by biting infected birds and can potentially transmit the virus by biting other animals or people.

With the presence of the virus now confirmed, people should start to pay more attention to protecting themselves against mosquito bites. 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 WNV 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 residence.
- 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.

**NOTE:** If you are a renter, please talk to your landlord about any concerns related to your property.

The chances of a person becoming infected with WNV are very low and most infected people (80%) will not even have any symptoms. Those who are infected that 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. Severe disease develops in less than 1% of those who become infected. 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.

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of WNV since 2001 among wild birds, horses, mosquitoes and people. Since 2002, there were 234 human cases (confirmed and suspected) of WNV statewide, with 23 reported in Dane County including four cases reported in 2013. During 2014, 6 cases of West Nile virus infection were reported among Wisconsin residents but none in Dane County.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health will continue surveillance for WNV until the end of the mosquito season. However, with the confirmation of the infected dead bird in Dane County, further testing will not be done here. You can still report sightings of sick/dead birds to the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

For more information on West Nile virus:

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

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

For a list of frequently asked questions on WNV

<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/index.html>

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An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/bird-tests-positive-for-west-nile-virus-in-dane-county-0>