



Public Health
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Knox County Health Department

Knox County Health Department · 1361 West Fremont Street · Galesburg, Illinois 61401
309.344.2224 (phone) · 309.344.5049 (fax) · www.knoxcountyhealth.org

MEDIA RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Michele Fishburn, MPH

Director of Community Health Improvement

Public Information Officer

Knox County Health Department

309/344-3314, extension 226

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTH DEPARTMENT BEGINS WEST NILE VIRUS SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES

Knox County, Illinois - Knox County Health Department staff are reminding residents that along with warmer temperatures comes an increase in mosquito activity; bringing with it a greater threat for West Nile virus (WNV). The Health Department began disease surveillance activities earlier this month and will continue to monitor for the presence of WNV in the community through October 15, 2010.

Reported dead birds will again be collected to determine if they are positive for West Nile Virus. "Dead birds have been proven to be excellent early indicators for the potential presence of West Nile Virus in the area," says Wil Hayes, Director of Health Protection for the Knox County Health Department; Department staff will be determining if reported birds are suitable for testing.

Mr. Hayes stressed that, "Citizens who observe a sick or dying bird should contact the Knox County Health Department." Department staff will then determine if the bird is to be picked up for laboratory testing. "Unfortunately, noted Hayes, "laboratory testing is not available on weekends; subsequently all dead birds found over the weekend should be disposed of using appropriate precautions."

This year, all perching birds (passiforms) such as the crow, blue jay, grackle, starling, robin, finches, sparrows, cardinals, swallows, flycatchers, cat birds, mockingbirds, warblers, and wrens will be accepted for testing. However no waterfowl, larger birds such as vultures, or endangered birds will be tested" stated Hayes.

If a dead bird is found between now and October 15th and appears to have died of natural causes, individuals should report the "sighting" to the Knox County Health Department Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 309-344-2224; for more information visit the Knox County Health Department website at www.knoxcountyhealth.org.