



NEWS

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Illinois Department of Public Health

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First Human West Nile Virus Case in Illinois For 2010 Reported

West Nile virus activity quickly increasing

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the first human West Nile virus case reported in Illinois for 2010. The DuPage County Health Department reported a woman in her 50s with onset of illness in early August.

“We are seeing a rapid increase in West Nile virus activity in mosquitoes, which means a higher risk for human cases, especially if we see hot weather through September,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold. “People should protect themselves against mosquitoes by wearing insect repellent and reducing any standing water around their homes, especially with the upcoming holiday weekend,”

So far this year, 25 counties have reported mosquito batches or birds testing positive for West Nile virus. The first West Nile virus positive results this year were reported on May 13 and included two birds, one from Carroll County and the other from St. Clair County.

Along with local health department surveillance, the Illinois Natural History Survey, a division of the Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability at the University of Illinois, also monitors mosquito activity and is reporting a dramatic upswing in positive West Nile virus samples, especially in Cook County.

“Although only six percent of the mosquito batches tested positive for West Nile virus in the last week of July, the analysis from the weeks of August 15 and 22 indicates that more 40 percent and 50 percent, respectively, of the mosquito samples from three mosquito abatement districts in Cook County were positive for West Nile virus,” according to Dr. Ephantus J. Muturi, Interim Medical Entomology Director at the Illinois Natural History Survey.

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In 2009, IDPH reported the first positive mosquito samples on June 1 in Cook County. The Department reported the first human case of West Nile virus in 2009 on August 31. Last year, 36 of the state's 102 counties reported having a West Nile positive bird, mosquito sample, horse or human case. Five human cases of West Nile disease were reported for 2009.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. The first human case in Illinois is not usually reported until July or later.

Only about two people in 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Illness from West Nile is usually mild and includes fever, headache and body aches, but serious illness, such as encephalitis and meningitis, and death are possible.

Persons older than 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn.
- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

Public health officials believe that a hot summer increases mosquito activity and the risk of disease from West Nile virus.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm.

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