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News media calls to David Hass at (630) 682-7979, ext. 7374

DuPage County Health Department reminds residents about West Nile virus precautions

The DuPage County Health Department reminds residents that as we head into summer it's important to remember to take West Nile virus precautions, such as wearing insect repellent and getting rid of standing water around your house, to reduce the risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus.

The Illinois Department of Public Health reported Monday (June 8) the first mosquitoes to test positive for West Nile virus were identified in southern Illinois.

Last year 28 of the state's 102 counties were found to have a West Nile positive bird, mosquito, horse or human case. A total of 20 human cases of West Nile disease, including one death, were reported last year in Illinois.

Surveillance for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests on mosquitoes, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds as well as the testing of sick horses and humans with West Nile-like disease symptoms. Citizens who observe a sick or dying crow, blue jay, robin or other perching bird should contact their local health department, which will determine if the bird will be picked up for testing.

DuPage County residents with questions about West Nile virus may call (630) 682-7400.

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.

(More)

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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 includes 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 could increase mosquito activity and the risk of disease from West Nile virus.

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

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