



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Newspaper Editors

From: Central Michigan District Health Department

RE: West Nile Virus and Mosquitos

Release Date: August 16, 2017

West Nile Virus and Mosquitos

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) has been notified by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services that a crow and raven have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). These birds were submitted from Roscommon County and are the first birds to test positive for WNV in the health district this year. Currently, 42 counties in Michigan have had one or more birds test positive for WNV. "We know that WNV has been present in Michigan for over 10 years and it continues to be a risk," stated Steve King, Director of Environmental Health Services.

A person can be exposed to WNV by the bite of a mosquito. WNV is not spread from person to person. Symptoms occur in only 1 in 5 people infected and may include: mild illness with fever, headache and body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. More serious illness occurs in 1 out of 150 infected and is more likely to occur in those over 60 years of age; it usually presents as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord).

Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for CMDHD stated, "In Michigan, mosquitos are not only responsible for transmitting the West Nile virus, they can also transmit St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern equine encephalitis, and the California group of encephalitis viruses that includes La Crosse encephalitis." The overall risk of getting a mosquito transmitted disease is very low but because the illness could become life threatening, precautions should be taken. Persons who experience high fever, severe or unusual headaches, neck stiffness, seizures or other unusual symptoms should seek medical care as soon as possible. Prevention tips include:

- Avoid activities in areas where large numbers of mosquitoes are present.
- Wear long sleeves when outdoors, especially at dusk and at dawn.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain the active ingredient DEET. When applying DEET to young children, spray DEET on a cloth, and then wipe it on a child's skin so that the eyes and hands are not sprayed. The Environmental Protection Agency has a website that can help you find a repellent that is right for you. Find the right repellent here: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>
- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Whenever you use an insecticide or insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the label for use. NOTE: Vitamin B and "ultrasonic" devices are NOT effective in preventing mosquito bites.
- Drain standing water in your yard or cover it with sand. Empty water from potential mosquito breeding sites including flowerpots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires, buckets, cans, and similar items in which mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Empty bird baths every week.
- Make sure your window screens are kept in good repair and that all of your doors are shut tightly.
- Keep your lawn mowed.

WNV is most commonly found in crows, ravens, blue jays and starlings. If you find a dead bird it can be reported at: <https://secure1.state.mi.us/ORS/Survey/4> . By reporting dead birds, you can help experts determine when WNV risk is increasing. A rapid rise in dead bird numbers precedes an increase in risk to humans. More information about mosquito-borne diseases and other emerging diseases can be found at: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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