



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

NICK LYON
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: Jennifer Smith
(517) 241-2112

Michigan's First 2015 Confirmed Human Cases of West Nile Virus Reported

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan health officials have identified the state's first confirmed human cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) for 2015 in Macomb, Monroe, and Ottawa counties, and are reminding people to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

“We have clear evidence that West Nile virus is present in the state again this summer,” says Dr. Eden Wells, Chief Medical Executive at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. “Even late in the season, remembering to take a few minutes to protect ourselves and our loved ones from mosquito bites when outside can make a big difference.”

Statewide, 57 birds have tested positive for WNV so far this season, and 11 WNV positive mosquito pools have been detected from Bay, Kent, Oakland, Saginaw, and Wayne counties. Infected birds and mosquitoes can provide an early warning of WNV activity in a community. For the most current information on mosquito-borne virus activity in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus.

Michigan residents are encouraged to take the following steps to avoid WNV:

- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.
- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other EPA approved product to exposed skin or clothing, and always following the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear light colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.

Take extra care during peak mosquito biting hours between dusk and dawn. Use repellent and protective clothing, or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.

Choose a repellent concentration rated for the time you will spend outdoors. When applying repellent to children, apply it to your own hands and rub them on the child. Avoid the eyes and mouth and do not apply to children's hands because they sometimes put their hands in their mouths. Do not apply repellents to infants under 6 months of age and instead place nets over strollers and baby carriers.

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Most people bitten by a WNV infected mosquito show no symptoms of illness. However, some become sick three to 15 days after exposure. About one-in-five infected persons will have mild illness with fever. About one in 150 infected people will become severely ill.

Symptoms of WNV include: encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord and brain linings) include stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness, convulsions and paralysis.

People 50 and older are more susceptible to severe WNV disease symptoms. Physicians are urged to test patients for WNV if they present with fever and signs of meningitis or encephalitis, or sudden painless paralysis in the absence of stroke in the summer months. For more information and surveillance activity about WNV, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus.

According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, people can stay healthy by using simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their families by reading and following all repellent label directions. MDARD also urges residents to consider using biological controls for small lakes and ponds you own, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti), which is available at many stores.

There is an effective vaccine for horses and horse owners to work with their local veterinarian to determine appropriate vaccination status. Because dawn and dusk are worst time for mosquitoes, MDARD recommends horses be kept inside at those times, and reiterates the importance of removing any stagnant water from the premises.

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