



NEWS

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Illinois Department of Public Health

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First Human West Nile Virus Case in Illinois For 2011 Reported

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the first human West Nile virus case reported in Illinois for 2011. The Cook County Health Department reported a man in his 80s became ill earlier this month.

“West Nile virus activity in mosquitoes and birds continues to increase across Illinois, which means a higher risk of people contracting the virus,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold. “People should protect themselves against mosquitoes by wearing insect repellent and getting rid of any standing water around their homes.”

So far this year, 12 counties have reported mosquito batches or birds testing positive for West Nile virus; Champaign, Cook, DuPage, Gallatin, Jackson, Kane, Kendall, LaSalle, Macon, St. Clair, Tazewell and Will counties. The first West Nile virus positive results this year were collected on June 8 and included two birds from LaSalle County.

In 2010, the first positive mosquito samples were collected on June 3 in Gallatin County. Last year, 30 of the state’s 102 counties were found to have a West Nile positive bird, mosquito, horse or human case. A total of 61 human cases of West Nile disease were reported in Illinois last year, the first reported on August 31.

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.

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.

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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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