



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2017

CONTACT:

Melaney Arnold – 217-558-0500

melaney.arnold@illinois.gov

First 2017 Human Case of West Nile Virus in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the first human case of West Nile virus reported in Illinois for 2017. A Will County resident in his 60s became ill at the end of June.

“This is typically the time of year we start to see human cases of West Nile virus in Illinois,” said Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Although the flooding in northeastern Illinois may be producing a large number of floodwater mosquitoes, those mosquitoes do not carry West Nile virus. However, the hot, dry conditions we’ve been seeing around the rest of Illinois, which leave small, stagnant pockets of standing water, create ideal breeding sites for the type of mosquito that does carry West Nile virus.”

The first human case of West Nile virus in 2016 was reported early in the year, on June 6, 2016. Last year, 61 counties in Illinois reported a West Nile virus positive mosquito batch, bird and/or human case. For the 2016 season, IDPH reported 155 human cases (although human cases are underreported), including six deaths.

Monitoring for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests for mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing humans with West Nile virus-like symptoms. People 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.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, which has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus.

While IDPH is also monitoring for Zika virus, which is primarily transmitted through the bite of a mosquito, the main type of mosquito that carries Zika virus, *Aedes aegypti*, is different and is very rarely found in Illinois. However, taking some simple precautions can help you avoid mosquito bites, regardless of the type of mosquito or the diseases they carry.

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Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – reduce, repel, and report.

- ✈ **REDUCE** - 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.
 - Eliminate, or refresh each week, all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires, and any other containers.

- ✈ **REPEL** - 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.

- ✈ **REPORT** – report locations where you see water sitting stagnant for more than a week such as roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes. The local health department or city government may be able to add larvicide to the water, which will kill any mosquito eggs.

Additional information about [West Nile virus](#) can be found on the [IDPH website](#).

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