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Contact: Tom Schlueter (630) 444-3098
(630) 417-9729 cell

IDPH finds first West Nile activity in Kane County

The first evidence of West Nile virus activity in Kane County has been found. A batch of mosquitoes collected in a trap administered by the Illinois Department of Public Health near Algonquin has tested positive for the disease.

We usually see our first evidence of West Nile in July or August. Although this is the first evidence in Kane County, 17 Illinois counties have seen either birds and/or mosquitoes test positive so far this year.

The Health Department monitors for WNV activity in your area. You can visit our Web site at http://kanehealth.com/wnv_surveillance.htm to view a map of the Health Department's trap locations throughout the county. Also as part of its West Nile program, the Health Department is collecting dead birds to be sent to the state lab for testing. Please call (630) 444-3040 to report the presence of freshly-dead birds (such as crows or blue jays) to determine if WNV testing is recommended. The birds must not show any signs of decay or trauma.

Last year, an especially hot and dry summer, Kane County had 13 human cases of the illness. You can view more detailed monitoring results from previous years by visiting http://kanehealth.com/west_nile.htm.

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 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about two persons out of 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. Use prevention methods whenever mosquitoes are present.
- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus 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.
- Change water in birdbaths weekly. Properly maintain wading pools and stock ornamental ponds with fish. Cover rain barrels with 16-mesh wire screen. 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.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found on the Kane County Health Department's Web site at www.kanehealth.com/west_nile.htm. You can also visit the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm. People also can call the IDPH West Nile Virus Hotline at (866) 369-9710 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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