

Madison and Dance County Public Health: Dane County mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus

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Protect Yourself Against Mosquito Bites

Mosquitoes found in Dane County have tested positive for West Nile virus. Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC) monitors mosquito traps across the county during summer months. This is the first positive test for West Nile virus in Dane County mosquitoes this year.

“Finding mosquitoes with West Nile virus in our community means residents need to continue their efforts to prevent mosquito bites to protect themselves from getting the virus,” says John Hausbeck, PHMDC Environmental Health Supervisor.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on infected birds, and are then able to pass it on to other birds and mammals when they bite.

Hausbeck says “The best ways to avoid West Nile virus are preventing mosquito bites and getting rid of places mosquitoes breed.”

PHMDC recommends the following actions to prevent mosquito bites:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing as well as exposed skin since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquitoes from entering.

PHMDC recommends the following actions to eliminate places mosquitoes breed:

- Dispose of items around your property that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, and small boats when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

Most people (80%) who are infected with West Nile virus do not get sick. Those who do become sick usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle aches, rash, and fatigue. Less than 1% of people infected with the virus get seriously sick with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, confusion, paralysis, and coma. Older adults and those with weakened immune systems are at greater risk of developing central nervous system illness that can be fatal.

To monitor for West Nile Virus in the community, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health asks that residents report sick or dead crows, blue jays, or ravens, to the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.