

What you need to know to protect yourself from West Nile Virus

Heard the buzz? Mosquito season is here and public health officials want to remind residents that mosquitoes can transmit a number of diseases, including West Nile Virus (WNV). It has had a presence in Oregon since 2004, Clackamas County, Multnomah County, Washington County, and Clark County, Washington all confirmed the presence of WMV in birds in 2007.

The spread of West Nile virus is unpredictable; however, trends throughout the country have shown a significant increase of cases in subsequent years. Following is an overview of West Nile Virus along with some prevention tips.

What is WNV?

West Nile Virus is carried by infected mosquitoes. It can cause serious illness in some people and horses. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds of the Corvid family, such as ravens, crows, jays and magpies. The mosquito can then transmit the infection to humans and animals by biting them. You cannot get the virus from another person or animal.

Most people who become infected with the West Nile Virus do not become ill. About 20 percent develop West Nile fever, which features fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally a rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms begin 3-14

days after the bite of an infected mosquito and, in cases of mild disease, last a few days. People with questions about WNV symptoms should call their health care provider.

About one out of 150 of those who become infected develops a severe infection known as West Nile encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of a severe infection can include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis. Symptoms of severe disease may last several weeks, although some brain and nerve damage may be permanent. There is no effective treatment for WNV infection other than supportive medical care.

There are no vaccinations for humans, but vaccinations are available for horses. Horse owners should contact their veterinarians for more information.

Prevention

There are two basic prevention strategies: reducing the mosquito population and avoiding mosquito bites. The best way to reduce the mosquito population is to drain sources of standing water. This will prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs and breeding.

At least once a week, empty water from flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels and cans.

Check for clogged rain gutters and clean them out.

Remove discarded tires, and items such as cans, bottles and other containers that could collect water.

Be sure to check for containers or trash in places that may be hard to see, such as under bushes or under your home.

Check around faucets and air conditioner units, repair leaks and eliminate puddles that remain for several days.

Cover boats, or store upside down or in a dry place.

Where feasible, fill all holes in the trees on your property.

When swimming season is over, empty and store wading pools in a dry place. Cover large pools and check frequently to ensure against mosquito breeding. Ordinary concentrations of pool chemicals will not kill mosquito larvae. Keep pool water circulating and run filters April through October.

Gambusia affinis (mosquito larvae-eating fish) can be placed in closed system ponds in Oregon; however, stocking ponds with gambusia is illegal

in Washington. In Oregon, call your local county vector control for more information. This is a free service, but supplies are limited.

Personal protection (avoiding mosquito bites)

Consider staying indoors during peak mosquito biting times – dawn, dusk and early evening.

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants outdoors.

Place mosquito netting over infant carriers.

Install or repair window and door screens.

Apply insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when you're outdoors. Other EPA approved repellents containing picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus are also shown to be effective. Be sure to read and follow the manufacturer's directions for use as printed on the product. Alternatively, spray clothing with DEET since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. If you spray your clothing, there is no need to spray repellent

containing DEET on the skin under your clothing.

Repellents may irritate the eyes and mouth, so avoid applying repellent to the hands of children. Read the manufacturer's instructions thoroughly when applying to children.

Detecting West Nile Virus

Dead Corvid birds (crows, jays, magpies and robins) may indicate that WNV is circulating between the birds and the mosquitoes in that area. The public can play an important role in helping to monitor for WNV. Call your local county vector control to report a dead Corvid.

For more information:

Columbia Public Health: 503-397-4651, 1-800-244-4870, phealth@chdpublichealth.com

Washington County Environmental Health: 503-846-8722, www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/hhs/env_hlth/vector/msqt_idx.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm

2007 saw rise in drug death numbers

Oregon State Medical Examiner Dr. Karen Gunson recently released drug-related death statistics for 2007 reflecting a continuing rise since 1999 and the third highest number of these deaths since 1997. The statistics showed a sharp increase in Heroin-related deaths while Methamphetamine and Cocaine-related deaths declined in comparison to last year's figures.

Statistics released by the State Medical Examiner indi-

cate 231 people died in Oregon during 2007 either from Heroin, Cocaine, Methamphetamine, or a combination use of drugs. Following a significant drop in 2001, drug-related deaths continued to rise, with eight percent increase for the 2007 year, the second straight year increasing over last year's 213 recorded deaths.

A closer look at the 231 drug-related deaths and the frequency of use in the total number of these deaths reflected:

- Heroin use was related to 115 deaths, an increase of 29 percent from last year's 89 deaths and the highest number since 2000 in this category.

- Methamphetamine use was related to 71 deaths, a decrease of 21 percent from last year's 90 deaths and the lowest number since 2002 in this category.

- Cocaine use was related to 55 deaths, a decrease of 14 percent from last year's 64 deaths.

- Combination of drug use was noted in 37 of the deaths, an increase of 18 percent from last year's 31 deaths.

There were two drug-related deaths in Columbia County, one from Heroin and one from Methamphetamines. Washington County drug-related deaths increased from 3 (2006) to 11 (2007).



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