



McLean County
Health Department
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Mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus in McLean County

BLOOMINGTON – Mosquitoes collected in McLean County tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). The mosquito batch collected in the 61705 area, west of Bloomington, is the first positive evidence of WNV presence this year in the county.

McLean County is one of 22 counties across the state to have a mosquito collection test positive for WNV in 2014. Seven birds have tested positive for WNV in Illinois so far this year. Last year, McLean County had two WNV-positive birds—one in Bloomington and one in Normal— and two positive human cases. In 2013, 117 Illinois residents were infected with WNV, resulting in 11 deaths. Seventy-six of Illinois' 102 counties had humans, birds, mosquitoes and/or horses test positive for the virus.

“A positive mosquito collection in the county highlights an increased threat of West Nile Virus, as infected mosquitoes pass the virus to humans,” McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe said. “As we head into the time of year when West Nile Virus is most active, it is important to remember to take precautionary measures to stay safe when outdoors— even if you are only outside in your own backyard.”

Residents are advised to take the following precautions to reduce their risk of WNV infection through mosquitoes:

- **REDUCE** exposure—wear protective clothing at dawn and dusk (the time when the Culex mosquito is most active), repair and replace worn screens on doors and windows, and eliminate stagnant, shallow water where mosquitoes breed (including bird baths, flower pots, wading pools, old tires and other receptacles).
- **REPEL** mosquitoes—apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picardin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- **REPORT** dead birds or water sources—contact the MCHD to report dead birds and areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may create ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

WNV human infection occurs primarily in midsummer to early fall, although mosquitoes that can carry the disease may be present from mid-April through October. MCHD surveillance of mosquitoes and birds for WNV infection began in May and will continue throughout the summer to assess the level of immediate risk to humans. MCHD Environmental Health Division has four sites throughout McLean County with mosquito traps that are collected and tested twice a week.

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West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. Culex mosquitoes, also known as the house mosquito, become infected with the virus by feeding on infected birds and produce more WNV-positive mosquitoes. Those mosquitoes then seek blood meals and subsequently infect humans and animals.

Mild cases of WNV can cause a slight fever or headache. Severe infections can lead to high fever, disorientation, and even paralysis or death. Persons at highest risk for serious illness are young children, adults 50 years of age or older and people with compromised immune systems. Anyone concerned about their risk or experiencing symptoms should contact a physician immediately and inform the doctor of any recent mosquito bites.

The health department is collecting and testing dead birds throughout the summer. McLean County residents who find a dead bird on their property should:

1. Contact the Environmental Health Division at (309) 888-5482. The department will only collect and test a limited number of birds. Birds eligible for testing must be dead for no longer than 24 hours and have no obvious signs of trauma. Those submitting bird specimens will receive further instructions at the time of the call.
2. To dispose of a dead bird that the health department cannot accept, adults should use gloves or tongs to place the dead bird inside two plastic bags. Residents living within municipal limits should place the bird in the trash. Rural residents who decide to bury the bird should assure that the location is safely away from water sources. Never handle a dead bird with bare hands, and always wash hands with soap and warm water after disposal.

WNV surveillance and prevention efforts in McLean County are funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health. For more information, visit <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/wnv>.

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