



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First McLean County bird tests positive for West Nile Virus

BLOOMINGTON – A bird collected in the town of Normal by the McLean County Health Department was confirmed positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) by the Illinois Department of Public Health. This is the second positive account of WNV presence in McLean County in 2014, as two mosquito collections from the same location tested positive this summer.

McLean County is one of 43 counties across the state to have WNV activity in 2014. The two WNV-positive mosquito collections in McLean County earlier in the summer were from the 61705 zip code. 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.

The rainy and cool summer in Illinois kept WNV-carrying mosquito populations down for some time. But the more recent periods of rain followed by high summer temperatures create pockets of shallow, stagnant water that are ideal breeding locations for mosquitoes that carry WNV.

“Because a bird tested positive for West Nile Virus in Normal, our environmental health staff will no longer accept birds from the 61761 zip code area, but will continue to closely monitor mosquito and bird activity throughout the county,” McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe said. “McLean County citizens are encouraged to wear mosquito repellent with DEET, wear long sleeves and pants at dawn and dusk hours, and empty stagnant, shallow water near their homes to reduce their risk of West Nile Virus infection.”

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.

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-

-More-

positive mosquitoes. Those mosquitoes then seek blood meals and subsequently infect humans and animals.

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. 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 through mid-October, now with the exception of the 61701 zip code. 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 www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm or <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/wnv>.

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