



NEWS



<http://health.mcleancountyil.gov>

www.facebook.com/mcleanhealth

www.twitter.com/mcleanhealth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 2015

CONTACT: Lisa Slater
(309) 888-5489 (office)
(309) 838-1599 (cell)

They're Baaaack!!! West Nile Virus Surveillance Begins at the McLean County Health Department

BLOOMINGTON, IL- As welcome as the May sunshine and warm temperatures are, those summer like days bring with them a not so welcome companion – the *Culex* mosquito. *Culex* mosquitoes, more commonly known as “house mosquitoes,” are the carriers of West Nile Virus (WNV). The mosquitoes become infected with the virus by feeding on infected birds; and then can transmit the virus to humans and animals when they bite for a quick blood meal. This particular mosquito prefers to breed in stagnant water.

As we enter into peak mosquito season, the McLean County Health Department has begun WNV surveillance efforts for the 2015 mosquito season (May through October) in McLean County. The health department will monitor virus activity in birds and mosquitoes to help assess the level of immediate risk to humans. If WNV activity is detected in an area, residents will receive a notification on their front doors from the health department, alerting them to the heightened risk in their area and providing them with tips for how to avoid being bitten.

“As the weather turns nice and individuals spend more time outdoors, it is important to take precautions to protect against mosquito bites and West Nile Virus,” McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe said. “Simple, everyday actions such as wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent containing DEET, and eliminating standing water near your home, provide significant defense from virus-spreading mosquito bites.”

-MORE-

As part of the health department's surveillance activities, they will begin collecting and testing dead birds this month.

McLean County residents who find a dead bird on their property should:

1. Contact the health department's Environmental Health Division at (309) 888-5482. Only a limited number of birds will be collected and tested. To be eligible for testing, birds must not have been dead for longer than 24 hours and they must have no obvious signs of trauma. Collection of birds for testing is done Monday through Thursday. 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.

So far in 2015, there have been no reports of WNV in McLean County. In 2014, McLean County ended the WNV season with four positive accounts of WNV presence -- two mosquito collections from the 61705 zip code and two birds, one from the Town of Normal and the other from the City of Bloomington tested positive for WNV. Statewide last year, there was a total of 44 reported cases of residents with WNV, resulting in four deaths. Overall, since 2002 when the Illinois Department of Public Health began receiving reports of human WNV cases, there have been 2,137 people infected, including 133 WNV-related deaths.

Residents are advised to take the following precautions to reduce their risk of mosquito bites:

- REDUCE exposure—wear protective clothing at dawn and dusk (the times of the day when the type of mosquito that carries WNV is most active), clean rain gutters, 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).

-MORE-

- 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 standing water sources—contact the McLean County Health Department to report dead birds and areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, shallow-flooded yards and similar locations that may provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

WNV is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports approximately 80 percent of people who are infected with WNV do not show any symptoms. Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected show mild symptoms, such as a slight fever or headache. About one in 150 people infected with WNV develop severe illness, leading to high fever, disorientation, tremors, and even paralysis or death.

Persons at highest risk for serious illness are 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 recent mosquito bites.

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>.

###