

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Three Indicators Confirm Presence of West Nile Virus In McLean County

BLOOMINGTON – This week, 3 indicators for the presence of West Nile Virus (WNV) in McLean County were reached, each for the first time this year: 1) a mosquito pool collected in the 61705 zipcode area, west of Bloomington, was positive for WNV in recent testing done by the McLean County Health Department; 2) a bird collected last week from the 61761 zipcode area by the McLean County Health Department tested positive for WNV by the Illinois Department of Public Health; and, 3) a McLean County resident was determined by the Illinois Department of Public Health this week to be a probable case of WNV.

Residents are again being advised to limit time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn and to take precautionary measures to limit exposure to mosquitoes. Some preventative steps residents can take to reduce their risk of WNV infection through mosquitoes include the 3 R's:

REDUCE exposure:

- ✓ wear protective clothing like long pants and long-sleeved shirts, along with socks and shoes, when outside from dawn until dusk (the time when the Culex mosquito is most active)
- ✓ repair and replace worn screens on doors and windows
- ✓ eliminate stagnant, shallow water weekly to prevent mosquitoes from breeding (including bird baths, flower pots, wading pools, old tires and other receptacles that collect water)

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 and standing 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

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McLean County is one of 39 counties across the state to have confirmed WNV activity this year. So far in 2016 in Illinois, there have been 1263 WNV-positive mosquito pools, the first occurring in southern Illinois in June; 12 positive birds, and 5 reported human cases of WNV, with no deaths occurring due to WNV, according to IDPH data updated on 8/18/16. In 2015, McLean County had 2 WNV-positive birds and no positive human cases. Statewide last year, 64 of Illinois' 102 counties had positive WNV cases involving humans, birds, mosquitoes and/or horses. Human cases in Illinois in 2015 numbered 77 and resulted in 9 deaths. Prior to McLean County's probable case of WNV identified this week, the last human case of WNV in McLean County was in 2013.

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. The MCHD Environmental Health Division has 3 sites throughout McLean County with mosquito traps that are collected and tested two times per week. When WNV is detected in mosquito pools, birds or humans, staff members canvas neighbors within a quarter-mile radius of the identified location to notify residents that the risk for WNV is high for that neighborhood. From Wednesday afternoon, August 17th through Thursday, August 18th, Environmental Health Division staff members went door-to-door in three separate neighborhoods notifying over 1,100 residences and businesses of the heightened risk for WNV using "Fight the Bite" door hangers and talking one-on-one with local residents.

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 will continue collecting and testing dead birds through mid-October, with the exception of birds from the 61761 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. 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 then 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.

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WNV surveillance and prevention efforts in McLean County are funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health. For more information about WNV visit the health department's website at

<http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/589/West-Nile-Virus> or, go to www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm.

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