



NEWS



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Third mosquito pool tests positive for West Nile Virus

With Labor Day weekend approaching, don't forget the threat

BLOOMINGTON – A third mosquito pool has tested positive for West Nile Virus. The mosquito pool was again from the 61705 zip code area, but this time from an area in east Bloomington. The two previous positive WNV mosquito pools in the 61705 zip code area were collected in areas west of Bloomington.

Today's findings serve as a caution as we approach a holiday weekend that will likely include picnics and other activities that extended time outdoors in the evening hours. According to McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe, "McLean County citizens are encouraged to wear shoes and socks, long pants and long-sleeved shirts; plus, apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, when mosquitoes are most active -- especially between dusk and dawn. With all the recent rain, residents are also encouraged to eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, to reduce their risk of West Nile Virus infection. Breeding areas can include water in bird baths, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles."

As reported in the *West Nile Virus Environmental Surveillance Weekly Update* from the Illinois Department of Public Health posted August 31st, McLean County is one of 44 counties in Illinois with confirmed WNV activity and there have been 1,820 positive mosquito pool samples, 20 positive birds, and 5 reported human cases of WNV.

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 three sites throughout McLean County with mosquito traps that are collected and tested twice a week.

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.

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The health department will continue collecting and testing dead birds through mid-October, with the exception of birds from the 61761 zip code area, since a positive bird was already confirmed from that area on August 19th. 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.

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.

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 and other mosquito-borne illnesses, visit the health department's website at <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/490/Mosquito-Borne-Illnesses>.

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