



NEWS



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Two birds test positive for West Nile Virus in McLean County

BLOOMINGTON – The McLean County Health Department has received notification that a bird from the 61752 zip code area and a bird from the 61701 zip code area have both tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) this week. A previous WNV positive bird was collected from the 61761 zip code area in August. As a result, the health department will no longer continue collecting dead birds from the 61752, 61701 and 61761 zip code areas, but will continue to monitor bird activity in other locations in the county.

Even with the recent drop in daytime and evening temperatures the WNV season is not over and the risk of possible human infection still exists. “We continue to encourage residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites by wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent, and limiting time outdoors between dusk and dawn” says Walt Howe, director of the McLean County Health Department. Mosquitoes that can carry WNV may be present from mid-April through October.

Preventative steps residents can take to reduce their risk of WNV infection include:

REDUCE exposure:

- ✓ wear protective clothing like long pants and long-sleeved shirts, along with socks and shoes, when outside from dusk until dawn (the time when the Culex mosquito is most active)
- ✓ repair and replace worn or torn 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 at (309) 888-5482 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

-MORE-

As reported in the *West Nile Virus Environmental Surveillance Weekly Update* from the Illinois Department of Public Health posted September 29th, McLean County is one of 52 counties in Illinois with confirmed WNV activity and there have been 2,296 positive mosquito pool samples, 61 positive birds, and 64 reported human cases of WNV statewide.

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.

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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