



# NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 19, 2018

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## **Positive Bird a Reminder of the Continued Presence of West Nile Virus in McLean County**

BLOOMINGTON – The McLean County Health Department has received notification that a bird from the 61704 zip code area has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). With the goal of protecting and promoting health, staff from the Health Department are going door-to-door to provide WNV prevention information at residences in the surrounding area.

The occasional dip in day and evening temperatures has not removed the risk of contracting WNV. With confirmation of an infected bird in the county, the Health Department reminds residents that avoiding mosquito bites is the best protection from WNV disease. All residents are advised to:

### REDUCE exposure

- ✓ Keep your skin covered with long pants and long-sleeved shirts, along with socks and shoes, when outside at dawn and dusk (when Culex mosquitoes are most active)
- ✓ Make sure windows and doors have screens to stop mosquitoes from entering and repair or replace screens with rips or holes
- ✓ Empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out items around the home that hold water on a weekly basis (including bird baths, flower pots, wading pools, old tires and other receptacles that collect water)

### REPEL mosquitoes

- ✓ apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions (consult a physician before using repellents on infants)

### REPORT dead birds and standing water sources

- ✓ 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-**

Symptoms of WNV disease can appear up to 13 or 14 days after an infection. 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.

Through the WNV Surveillance program, the McLean County Health Department's Environmental Health Division establishes mosquito traps at sites throughout McLean County that are collected and tested twice a week. 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 <https://health.mcleancountyil.gov/490/Mosquito-Borne-Illnesses> or, go to [www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm).

**###**

# Background

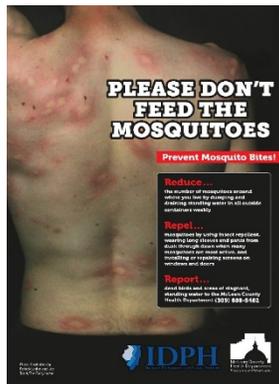
WNV human infection occurs primarily in midsummer to early fall, although mosquitoes that can carry the disease may be present from mid-April through October.

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.

The health department is authorized to collect a limited number of birds each season. Testing decisions are based on bird species, condition of the carcass, and location of death. If a bird has already tested positive from a location in the county, there is often no need to test additional birds from that locale. Bird species tested include: crow, jay, magpie, raven, sparrow, finch, grackles, starlings, robins, cardinals, hawks and owls. Birds that will not be accepted include: pigeons, ducks, geese, chickens, other large birds and endangered species.

It is extremely unlikely that a person would contract West Nile virus from a dead bird; however, safety precautions are recommended when handling any dead animals. To safely dispose of a dead bird that the health department cannot accept, adults should be mindful of possible leaking fluids, sharp beaks, and claws, and always:

- Wear non-cloth disposable gloves made of rubber or latex, a plastic bag over your hands if gloves are not available, or use a shovel or tongs to pick up the bird and place it in a plastic bag.
- Seal the plastic bag once the bird is in it and place the bag inside a second plastic bag and seal it.
- Place the bird in the trash, if you live within municipal limits.
- Bury the bird in a location that is safely away from water sources, if you are a rural resident
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water immediately after disposing of the bird.



(L) Photo of a McLean County Health Department WNV intern separating mosquitoes from a trap collection

(M) A McLean County Health Department WNV prevention graphic -- photo illustration by Patrick Larkin and Joe Scott/The Daily Iowan.

(R) Two mosquito traps at a McLean County Health Department surveillance location.