



News

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Confirmation of West Nile Virus Presence in McLean County

Mosquitoes collected from 61705 zip code test positive for the virus

Bird collected in 61761 zip code tested positive for the virus

BLOOMINGTON – A mosquito pool collected in the 61705 area, west of Bloomington, was positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in testing done by the McLean County Health Department (MCHD). The positive mosquito pool is the first positive evidence of WNV in the county this year. A dead bird collected in the 61761 area by the MCHD also tested positive for WNV.

Residents are 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:

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, flowerpots, 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

- ✓ 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

As of July 29, 2021, McLean County was one of 18 counties in Illinois with confirmed WNV activity. In Illinois there have been 223 positive mosquito pool samples, two positive bird samples, and no 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.

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, and 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. 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.

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/589/West-Nile-Virus> or go to www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm.

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