



News Release

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*Always working for a
safer and healthier
community.*

2008 West Nile virus activity in Washington
As of today, 18 mosquito samples, 0 birds, 8 horses, and 0 people have tested positive for West Nile virus in Washington.

West Nile Virus Websites:

Benton-Franklin Health District
www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv

Washington Department of Health
www.doh.wa.gov/wnv

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/westnile

Infected Mosquitoes Provide Vital Reminder to Fight the Bite *Monitoring program identifies West Nile virus positive mosquitoes in West Richland*

A sample of mosquitoes collected in West Richland has tested positive for West Nile virus. It is the first West Nile virus-positive surveillance identified near the Tri Cities since monitoring began in 1999. The mosquitoes were collected by the Benton County Mosquito Control District as part of their routine monitoring program. "Right now we are seeing an increase in virus activity particularly by the Yakima and Benton County border and now in West Richland," said James Henriksen, District Manager. "We're concerned about public health and are asking people to do their part by eliminating standing water and to protect themselves from mosquito bites," said Henriksen.

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on an infected bird and can pass the virus to people, horses or other animals.

"Finding positive mosquitoes alerts us that West Nile is active in our area and people should take steps to avoid mosquito bites to prevent infection" said Susan Shelton, Environmental Health Specialist with the Benton-Franklin Health District. "Traditionally, the risk of West Nile infection increases in August and September and it is possible we will see cases in local animals and people this year."

"Most people infected with West Nile virus don't have any symptoms but in a few cases, the virus can cause serious illness including inflammation of the brain or spinal cord. Anyone can get West Nile, but people over age 50 have the highest risk for serious illness," said Heather Hill, Communicable Disease Supervisor at the Health District. "There's no specific treatment for West Nile virus infection so prevention is extremely important."

Residents should take precautions to help combat West Nile virus by avoiding mosquito bites and limiting mosquito breeding around their homes. Recommendations include:

- Plan outdoor activities away from dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito-infested areas.
- Use an effective mosquito repellent and follow label instructions. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 are recommended.
- Make sure the screens on all doors and windows work properly.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding by emptying anything that holds standing water such as old tires, buckets, plastic tarps, clogged gutters, and irrigation leaks. Change the water in birdbaths, fountains, wading pools, and animal troughs once a week.

Residents are encouraged to continue reporting dead birds, especially crows, magpies, and ravens, to the Benton-Franklin Health District for possible collection and testing. Birds may be reported at 460-HAWK or online at www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv. More information on West Nile virus is available on the Benton-Franklin Health District Web site at www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv. Information from Benton County Mosquito Control is available online at www.mosquitocontrol.org.

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