News Release

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Always working for a safer and healthier community.

2009 West Nile virus activity in Washington
So far, 10 people, 16 birds, 43 horses, and 336 mosquito samples 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

Local Mosquito Control Websites:

Benton County
www.mosquitocontrol.org

Franklin County
www.fcmcd.org

TEN HUMAN WEST NILE VIRUS CASES IN WASHINGTON

Prevent mosquito bites to prevent becoming a West Nile Virus statistic

Nine additional human cases of West Nile virus have been confirmed in Washington, bringing this year's total to ten. All were infected in eastern Washington in July and August. Three of the cases live in Benton County, four in Yakima County, one in Grant County, and one is a teenager from Whatcom County that was infected while camping in Benton County. The first case found in Washington this year, a resident of Klickitat County, was confirmed in August. No deaths in Washington have been reported.

"Our local cases have been found in people with severe symptoms including encephalitis and are likely only the tip of the iceberg: we expect we have hundreds of residents with mild illness that did not seek medical care or were not tested" said Dr. Larry Jecha, Health Officer.

This year in Benton County, 3 people, 15 horses, 7 birds, and 128 mosquito samples have tested positive for West Nile virus. Franklin County has had 3 horses, 2 birds, and 45 mosquito samples confirmed positive. Mosquitoes and horses continue to be found with the virus in both counties.

"Although it takes planning and repeated effort, West Nile infection can be prevented" said Susan Shelton, environmental health specialist. Our local mosquito control districts continue to reduce mosquito numbers, but preventing West Nile requires each of us that live in or visit our area to Fight the Bite."

Precautions include:

- If possible, stay indoors during prime mosquito biting times: dusk and dawn.
- If going outside, take an approved insect repellent. Approved mosquito repellents include DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Be sure to read and follow the label directions and apply if mosquitoes are biting.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Windows and doors without screens should be kept shut, especially at night.
- Dress with long sleeves, pants, and a hat when mosquitoes are present.
- Drain sources of standing water around your home so mosquitoes don't grow.

The risk of West Nile virus infection will be high until mosquitoes go away after the first hard frost. To track the virus in the Pacific Northwest or get additional information, view the BFHD West Nile website at www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv.

Symptoms

West Nile virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people with the virus have no symptoms, but some may become ill 3-14 days after the mosquito bite.

An estimated two people out of ten infected with the virus will have symptoms. Illness from West Nile is usually mild and includes fever, head and body aches, and possibly a rash. Serious illness that involves the nervous system, such as encephalitis and meningitis, and death are also possible. Although anyone may have severe illness, people over 50 years old usually have the highest risk. Anyone with symptoms is encouraged to contact their health care provider.

The best way to prevent West Nile illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

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