News Release

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Always working for a safer and healthier community.

2009 West Nile virus activity in Washington
So far, 7 bird, 3 horses, 0 people, and 161 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

WEST NILE VIRUS ACTIVITY IN ANIMALS INDICATES HIGH RISK OF HUMAN CASES

Surveillance shows the virus is widespread in Benton County

The Benton-Franklin Health District received confirmation today that 5 additional birds found in Prosser, West Richland, Kennewick, and Richland have tested positive for West Nile virus. This brings Benton County's total to 6 birds, 1 horse, and over 50 mosquito samples positive for the virus. "This widespread West Nile virus activity indicates a high risk of cases to residents and visitors in our area," said Susan Shelton, an environmental health specialist with the District. "The potential for human cases will be at the highest in our area for the next two months, especially if people do not take additional precautions to fight mosquito bites."

In addition to the environmental findings, the Benton-Franklin Health District has requested a sample from a Prosser resident that tested presumptive positive at a local laboratory be forwarded to the Washington State Department of Health for confirmation. "Although this initial positive test may not be confirmed as West Nile virus, we are notifying the public and our medical providers about the potential case as a reminder that the virus can cause severe illness" said Dr. Larry Jecha, Health Officer with the Benton-Franklin Health District. "This time of year—late summer and early autumn—is when cases in people traditionally appear. There is no cure for West Nile virus, but fighting mosquito bites helps to prevent infection."

Prevention

The best way to prevent West Nile infection is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. **Personal protection measures include:**

- When outside, wear an approved insect repellent. Approved mosquito repellents include DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Be sure to read and follow the label directions.
- Drain sources of standing water around your home.
- 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.

West Nile virus

West Nile virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people with the virus have no symptoms of illness, but some may become ill 3-14 days after the mosquito bite. In the United States, most human cases appear in August and September. There is no human vaccine or cure for the virus.

Symptoms

An estimated two people out of ten infected with the virus will have symptoms of illness. 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.

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