



News Release

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Date: August 27, 2009

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*Always working for a
safer and healthier
community.*

2009 West Nile virus activity in Washington
So far, 1 person, 8 birds, 23 horses, and 265 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.fcncd.org

INCREASED BIRD DEATHS REMINDER OF CONTINUED THREAT OF WEST NILE IN AREA

Fight the bite to prevent illness

The number of dead crows reported to the Benton-Franklin Health District has jumped from 1 reported a few weeks ago to 16 reported in the last two days. "In addition to the increased number of calls we're receiving, many of our callers describe having seen the bird slowly die with symptoms characteristic of West Nile virus" said Susan Shelton, an environmental health specialist with the District.

Like people, the majority of animals survive West Nile infection, but some (in particular horses, crows, magpies, hawks, and squirrels) suffer severe illness that is not treatable. "We've lost several horses and birds this summer and we also have several residents symptomatic with severe and debilitating illness. I hope the reports of the devastating effect of West Nile virus has increased the vigilance of our residents."

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.
- 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.

Because the virus has been found in numerous birds and mosquito samples throughout Benton County, the Benton-Franklin Health District has stopped collecting birds in the county to test for the virus. "We greatly appreciate the help of our residents this summer. Due to their calls, we identified the first bird and the majority of birds found positive in the state this year." Testing continues for Franklin County; so far, no birds have tested positive.

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.