



News Release

Contact: Susan Shelton, RS
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Date: June 1, 2011

BENTON-FRANKLIN
HEALTH DISTRICT
www.bfhd.wa.gov

KENNEWICK
7102 West Okanogan
Place

PASCO
412 West Clark Street

PROSSER
310 Seventh Avenue

West Nile Virus Websites:

BFHD West Nile Website
www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv

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

Centers for Disease
Control
www.cdc.gov/westnile

Follow us for West Nile
virus-related tweets
twitter.com/BiterFighter

WEST NILE VIRUS: BFHD BEGINS BIRDWATCH 2011 *Dead Bird Surveillance Begins June 1*

KENNEWICK — Is it the buzzing of a neighbor's lawn mower or hungry mosquitoes you hear? In addition to helping the lawn grow, the upcoming warm weather and recent flooding will likely increase the number of mosquitoes in our area. An increase in mosquitoes may also increase your risk of getting exposed to West Nile virus or other germs mosquitoes can spread.

"We hope the return of warm weather and summer activities will remind our residents this is also the time to be vigilant against mosquitoes and West Nile virus," said Susan Shelton, an environmental health specialist with the Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD). "Residents can help limit the illnesses caused by West Nile virus by reporting dead birds, reducing mosquito breeding sites, and repelling mosquito bites."

Found in birds, West Nile virus spreads when mosquitoes bite an infected bird and then bite another bird or other animal, including people. Because there is no human vaccine or cure for West Nile virus infection, prevention is the most reliable protection from illness.

"In our continued effort to help protect our community from environmental health hazards, we started our annual Dead Bird Reporting line today for residents to report the location of dead birds found in our area" said BFHD Environmental Health Director, Bruce Perkins. Reported birds, as well as horses and mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile virus, are mapped to help track the activity of the virus in our community. In addition to mapping, BFHD collects certain birds to be tested for the virus.

The BFHD Dead Bird Reporting line is 509-460-HAWK. The map of potential West Nile virus activity reported from June 1 – October 1 is available on the BFHD West Nile website: www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv

When reporting dead birds, it is important to include the location and the condition, type and number of birds found. Although BFHD maps all reported birds, very few will be collected due to bird type and condition. Only crows, ravens, magpies, hawks, and owls that are fully intact with no signs of trauma or decay can be tested.



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WEST NILE VIRUS: BFHD BEGINS BIRDWATCH 2011 *continued*

Birds not collected for testing may be wrapped in two plastic bags and placed in the outdoor garbage. Gloves, a shovel, or a plastic bag should be used to prevent touching the bird during the disposal process. Even if steps were taken not to touch the bird, hands should be washed afterward.

In addition to reporting dead birds, residents are encouraged to help reduce their exposure to mosquitoes. Personal protection tips include:

- Drain sources of standing water around your home each week so mosquitoes don't have a good place to lay their eggs
- Dress with long sleeves, pants, and a hat when outdoors and mosquitoes are present
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Windows and doors without screens should be kept shut, especially at night.
- Wear an insect repellent when mosquitoes are around, especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Recommended repellents include DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Be sure to read and follow the label directions.

Last year was a very quiet year for West Nile activity in Washington. Throughout the state, two human cases were reported (one in Grant County and one in a Chelan County resident), two positive birds were found in Grant County, and mosquitoes with the virus were found in Benton, Grant, and Yakima Counties. No positive horses were reported throughout the state.

Although last year was quiet, 2009 was a busy year for the virus in our area. The virus was found in twenty-six horses, nine birds, and 173 mosquito samples in Benton and Franklin Counties. In addition, nine human cases were reported in Benton County residents (no confirmed human cases found in Franklin County).

Learn more about West Nile virus and its activity in the northwest through BFHD's West Nile website at www.bfhd.wa.gov/wnv.

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