

MUSKEGON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Muskegon County Health Department West Nile Virus Surveillance

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause swelling of the brain (encephalitis) or swelling of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). West Nile virus is spread to humans primarily by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected with West Nile virus when they feed on sick birds that carry the virus in their blood. Crows are very susceptible to infection with West Nile virus and will die within two to three weeks of exposure. Therefore the presence of dead crows is the best way to predict if West Nile virus is in an area. West Nile virus was first detected in Muskegon County in a bird in 2001, and in a human in 2002.

During , the presence of West Nile virus (WNV) will be confirmed through testing of dead birds in each zip code. Once a particular zip code receives a confirmed positive for the virus, no more samples from that zip code will be tested. The Health Department will submit the birds to the State of Michigan for testing. No testing is performed at the Health Department.

What kinds of birds should be reported?

Please *only* report recently dead Corvid species. Corvid species include the following birds;

- Crows, Ravens and Blue Jays.*

Birds Commonly Mistaken for Corvids:

- Red winged Blackbird-* Male is black with reddish-orange shoulder stripe. *Brown-Headed*
- Cowbird-* Male has metallic green/black body with brown head.
- Common Grackle-* Male appears all black, but has iridescent purple head, neck and breast, pale yellow eyes, common throughout Michigan.
- European Starling-* Black with iridescent green and purple has white spots on head and body, which are most evident during fall.
- Brewer's Blackbird-* Male is black, with iridescent purple around head and neck, iridescent green on body and wings; eyes are yellow, Michigan summer breeding range is Western UP and Northern Lower, *rare* but may be seen south of range in spring.

How do I report a dead bird?

Reports can be filed online at www.muskegonhealth.net, or by Calling **Muskegon County Vector Control at 724-6007**

Do not touch the bird. Vector Control will provide you with instructions.

Only those birds which are *recently* dead (appear to have died within the last 48 hours), with no evidence of decomposition (noxious odor; presence of small, white fly larvae (maggots) or predator trauma (open body cavities, exposed muscles) will be accepted for testing.

How to Dispose of a Dead Bird or Mammal

A dead bird or mammal should be buried or disposed of in your garbage. *Always avoid barehanded contact when handling dead animals.* If gloves are not available, Y04 may turn a plastic shopping bag inside out and scoop up the specimen with the bag.

Prevention of West Nile Virus: What can you do?

Q. What can I do to reduce my risk of becoming infected with West Nile virus?

A. Here are preventive measures that you and your family can take:

Protect yourself from mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. Generally, the more active ingredient a repellent contains the longer it can protect you from mosquito bites. A higher percentage of active ingredients in a repellent do not mean that your protection is better-just that it will last longer. Choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that you will be outdoors.
 - Repellents may irritate the eyes and mouth, so avoid applying repellent to the hands of children.
 - Whenever you use an insecticide or insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the *manufacturer's DIRECTIONS FOR USE, as printed on the product.*
- Spray clothing with repellents containing permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent since mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to exposed skin. Do not apply repellent to skin under your clothing.
- When weather permits, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Place mosquito netting over infant carriers when you are outdoors with infants.
- Consider staying indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening, which are peak mosquito biting times.

- Install or repair window and door screens so that mosquitoes cannot get indoors.

Help reduce the number of mosquitoes in areas outdoors where you work or play, by draining sources of standing water. In this way, you reduce the number of places mosquitoes can lay their eggs and breed.

- At least once or twice a week, empty water from flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans.
- Check for clogged rain gutters and clean them out.
- Remove discarded tires, and other items that could collect water.
- Be sure to check for containers or trash in places that may be hard to see, such as under bushes or under your home.

What Are the Symptoms of WNV?

•**Serious Symptoms in a Few People.** About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

•**Milder Symptoms in Some People.** Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have I symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.

•**No Symptoms in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

Sources: CDC, Michigan DNR, Muskegon County Health Department.

For more important information on how you can protect yourself and your family via the web, see: www.muskegonhealth.net www.cdc.gov www.michigan.gov/dnr