



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

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STATE ACTIVATES DEAD BIRD REPORTING HOTLINE TO TRACK WEST NILE VIRUS

MADISON—State health officials have reactivated the statewide, toll-free **Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610** to track cases of West Nile virus (WNV).

“Dead birds act as an early warning system for WNV,” said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “Finding the virus in birds indicates that it may be present in local mosquito population bites, triggering special prevention and insect-control measures.”

Persons who observe a dead bird can call the hotline to arrange to have the bird tested for WNV. Hotline staff can answer questions about dead birds and provide information on safe handling and disposal. People should not handle dead birds with their bare hands.

WNV is spread to people by the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. Mosquitoes get infected with it by feeding on infected birds and can then transmit the virus to other animals, birds, and humans.

Only one of five people infected with WNV will have symptoms, including fever, headache, body aches, swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. In rare cases, it can cause severe disease with additional symptoms including muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, coma, and potentially death. Older people are at greater risk of developing severe illness.

Symptoms begin between three to 14 days after a person is bitten by an infected mosquito and typically last a few days. People who become ill and think they have WNV should contact their healthcare provider for treatment of symptoms.

The best way to prevent WNV and other mosquito-borne infections is to prevent mosquito bites,” Foldy said. Mosquitoes breed in water, so eliminating standing water around homes and workplaces reduces mosquito breeding sites and the risk of bites. Even small pools formed in ashtrays or old tires can be breeding grounds.

Other measures to help decrease the risk of mosquito bites include:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to skin and spray clothing with insect repellent since mosquitoes may bite through clothing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends using products that contain active ingredients approved and registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These products display an EPA registration number on the label.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts to reduce bites.
- Repair window and door screens to prevent mosquito entry
- Properly dispose of items that hold water such as tin cans, plastic containers, pots or discarded tires

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- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers
- Trim tall grass, weeds and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas

Since 2001, the Department of Health Services has monitored wild birds, horses and humans to check the spread of WNV. In 2002, the state documented its first human infections, with 52 human cases. This was followed by 17 human cases in 2003, 12 in 2004, 17 in 2005, 21 in 2006, 12 in 2007, 8 in 2008 and one in 2009.

For more information on West Nile virus, go to <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/westNilevirus/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

For information regarding mosquito repellents, visit http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/insect_repellent.htm

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