

West Nile kills crow in county

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JEFFERSON — Jefferson County has recorded a confirmed case of West Nile Virus killing a crow, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health has announced.

This marks the first bird that tested positive for West Nile virus in Jefferson County since surveillance for the mosquito-transmitted virus began May 1.

“The positive bird result means that residents of Jefferson County need to be more vigilant in their personal protective measures to prevent mosquito bites,” Jefferson County Health Department director Gail Scott said, noting that the dead crow was found on May 28.

Originally from Africa, the virus first appeared in the United States in 1999 in the New York City area. The first human cases were identified in Wisconsin in 2002.

West Nile Virus is carried by mosquitos and transmitted through a bite by an infected insect. Mosquitos become infected with the disease by feeding on infected birds and their bite can infect humans.

Scott reported that typically, infected birds precede any human cases in an area, but it is not inevitable that human infections will follow.

“Jefferson County residents should be aware of West Nile Virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” she said. “The West Nile Virus seems to be here to stay, so the best way to avoid the disease is to reduce exposure to and eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes.” among wild birds, horses, mosquitoes and people The state Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of West Nile Virus since 2001.

During 2002, the state documented its first human infections, with 52 cases. Last year, six cases of West Nile Virus infection were reported among Wisconsin residents. During the 13 years of monitoring, West Nile infections in humans have been reported from June through October; however, most reported becoming ill in August and September.

The majority of people, 80 percent, who are infected with West Nile Virus do not get sick. Scott noted that those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash, and fatigue. Less than 1 percent of people infected with the virus get seriously ill with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, confusion, paralysis, and coma.

Older adults and those with compromised immune systems are at a greater risk of developing central nervous system illness that can be fatal.

Scott said the Jefferson County Health Department recommends the following:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.

- Apply insect repellent to clothing, as well as exposed skin since mosquitoes might bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry.
- Properly dispose of items that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- 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.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health will continue surveillance for West Nile Virus until the end of the mosquito season. To report a sick or dead crow, bluejay, or raven, call the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

For more information on West Nile virus <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/arboviral/westnilevirus.htm>.

Persons who suspect they might be infected with the virus are urged to contact their physician.