

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Margaret Gesner, Health Officer
Central Racine County Health Department
Phone: 262-898-4460

For Immediate Release

Crow Tests Positive for West Nile Virus in Racine County

The Central Racine County Health Department reports that a dead crow found in Racine County has tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first bird that tested positive for West Nile virus in Racine County since surveillance for the mosquito-transmitted virus began May 1st of this year.

“The positive bird means that residents of Racine County need to be more vigilant in their personal protective measures to prevent mosquito bites,” said Margaret Gesner, Health Officer.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected birds.

“Racine County residents should be aware of West Nile virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Gesner 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.”

The Central Racine 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 may 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 majority of people (80%) who are infected with West Nile virus do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash, and fatigue. Less than 1% 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 greater risk of developing central nervous system illness that can be fatal.

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of West Nile virus since 2001 among wild-birds, horses, mosquitoes, and people. During 2002, the state documented its first human infections and 52 cases were reported that year. During 2016, 13 cases of West Nile virus infection were reported among Wisconsin residents. West Nile virus infections in humans have been reported from June through October; however, most reported becoming ill with West Nile virus in August and September.

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, blue jay, or raven, please call the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

For more information on West Nile virus:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/ArboviralDiseases/WestNileVirus/Index.htm>