



Protecting Yourself from West Nile Virus

With heavy rains and flooding creating the potential for a bumper crop of mosquitoes, West Nile Virus surveillance activities have been launched in Douglas County. The Health Department has started trapping mosquitoes, spreading larvicide and taking reports of dead birds that will be collected and tested for the virus.

For a bird to be included in the reporting, it should appear to have died within the last 24 hours and not be decomposed. The public is asked to call the Douglas County Health Department at 402-444-7489 or 402-444-7481 to report this information. Trapped mosquitoes are sent to the state laboratory for analysis. Larvicide is used to kill mosquito larvae before they can develop into adults.

The Health Department also has some advice to help you avoid mosquito bites:

- Apply a mosquito repellent that includes DEET. The CDC also has approved picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. The CDC generally recommends that when using sunscreen and repellent, the sunscreen should be applied first. It is not recommended to use products that combine sunscreen and repellent.
- Wear loose, long-sleeved shirts, plus pants, shoes and socks when outdoors.
- Avoid outdoor activity around dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Remove standing water or report it to the Health Department for treatment.

The West Nile Virus can be spread to people if they are bitten by mosquitoes that picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird, but only a small percentage of mosquitoes carry the virus.

“It is impossible to predict how many West Nile cases we will have this year, but, we have been very effective in reducing the threat” Health Director Dr. Adi Pour said. “This year’s rain and flooding will make for a new challenge in controlling the mosquito population.”

In recent years, the number of West Nile virus cases in Douglas County has ranged from 69 in 2003 to a low of two cases a year later. Last year the county reported eight cases of West Nile virus.

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