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Mosquito Bites are Still a Concern in Fall Continue to Protect Yourself Against West Nile Virus

Eau Claire, Wisconsin – September 21st, 2018. In addition to being a nuisance during your outdoor events, mosquito bites can also be a threat to your health. So far in 2018, over 50% of Wisconsin counties have had birds or other animals test positive for West Nile virus. This includes one bird that was collected in Eau Claire County. This is the 7th year in a row that at least one bird has been verified to have died from an infection in Eau Claire County. This suggests that West Nile virus will continue to be a threat in our area going forward.

Mosquitoes can become infected with West Nile virus by feeding on infected birds and other animals, which they can then spread to humans. While most infected humans report becoming ill from West Nile virus infections in August and September, humans have become ill with the virus as late as November in Wisconsin. The recent rainfall and above-average temperatures seem to have caused a spike in mosquito activity, so it's important that you do not let your guard down during the fall season.

“All it takes is one bite for a mosquito or tick to pass along a devastating disease. It is important to protect yourself from insect bites whenever you plan to be outdoors,” says Matt Steinbach, Environmental Sciences Division Manager.



The Health Department recommends the following ways to prevent mosquito bites.

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use insect repellent. Follow instructions on how to apply to clothing and skin.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good condition to prevent mosquito entry.
- Don't have items around your property that can hold stagnant water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Keep roof gutters and downspouts clean to ensure proper drainage.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths 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 your yard 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. However, 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 may become 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 Wisconsin 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 2017, 51 cases of West Nile virus infection were reported among Wisconsin residents, including 1 in Eau Claire County.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health typically continues surveillance for West Nile virus through the end of the September. 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>

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