



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Remove sources of standing water to prevent West Nile Virus

The recent wet spring is sure to breed a good crop of mosquitoes, but while they may be annoying, they are not the kind that spreads West Nile virus. The mosquitoes we typically see in late spring and early summer are called, appropriately, “nuisance” or floodwater mosquitoes.

West Nile virus is most commonly associated with the Culex mosquito. Hot, dry weather and stagnant water are the two main ingredients prized by the Culex. As temperatures rise, we usually begin to see our first human cases in July or August.

“Now is a good time to get out and inspect your yard for items such as old tires and clogged gutters where stagnant water can accumulate. These are the types of areas that provide the ideal breeding spots for the Culex mosquito,” said Paul Kuehnert, Executive Director of the Kane County Health Department. “By identifying problem areas now, you will be able to protect yourself later in the summer.”

Last year there were five cases reported in people in Kane County. In 2009, an unusually mild summer with cool temperatures, there were no human cases of West Nile Virus reported in Kane County. There were three cases of the virus reported in 2008. In 2007 there were 13, four in 2006, 17 in 2005, two in 2004, none in 2003 and nine in 2002.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about two persons out of 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Illness from West Nile is usually mild and includes fever, headache and body aches, but serious illness, such as encephalitis and meningitis, and death are possible. Persons older than 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

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The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. Use prevention methods whenever mosquitoes are present.
- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- Change water in birdbaths weekly. Properly maintain wading pools and stock ornamental ponds with fish. Cover rain barrels with 16-mesh wire screen. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found on the Kane County Health Department's Web site at www.kanehealth.com/west_nile.htm, the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm. People also can call the IDPH West Nile Virus Hotline at (866) 369-9710 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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