



Phone: (715)743-5105 | Toll Free 1-877-743-5105 | Fax (715)743-5115 |
<http://www.co.clark.wi.us/healthdepartment>

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

August 2, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Robert Leischow, MPH
Health Officer | Director

West Nile Virus Detected in Clark County

The Clark County Health Department reports a dead crow found in Clark County on July 26, 2016 has tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first bird that tested positive for West Nile virus in Clark County since surveillance for the mosquito-transmitted virus began May 1.

“The positive bird means that residents of Clark County need to be more vigilant in their personal protective measures to prevent mosquito bites,” said Robert Leischow, Health Officer/Public Health Director.

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

“Clark County residents should be aware of West Nile virus and take some simple precautionary steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Leischow 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 Clark 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 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 2015, 9 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. With confirmation that the mosquitos that carry West Nile Virus are present in Clark County, no additional sick or dead crows, blue jays or ravens need to be reported to the Health Department. However, questions can be directed to 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>