



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 2, 2009

For More Information, Contact:
Michelle Feist
Tracy K Miller, MPH
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: mafeist@nd.gov
tkmiller@nd.gov

West Nile Virus Surveillance Underway in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – On June 1, 2009, the North Dakota Department of Health – in conjunction with several local, state, federal and private agencies – began coordination of West Nile virus surveillance activities to determine the prevalence of the disease across the state, according to Michelle Feist, West Nile virus surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health.

Statewide surveillance activities include reporting and testing sick horses, trapping and testing mosquitoes, monitoring illness in humans, and reporting and testing dead birds. Only certain bird species – such as crows, magpies, blue jays, ravens, hawks, eagles and owls – will be tested for West Nile virus this year.

“Although not all birds will be accepted for testing, the Department of Health is still interested in reports of dead birds,” Feist said. “People who find a dead bird that is not on the test list or is too decomposed for testing are asked to make a report via the online dead-bird reporting form found at www.ndhealth.gov/wnv or by calling the Department of Health at 800.472.2180.”

People who have questions about dead bird testing and reporting can contact their local public health unit, Indian Health Service sanitarian, extension agent, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the USDA Wildlife Services or the North Dakota Department of Health.

In 2008, 37 West Nile virus cases in humans were reported to the Department of Health, with no deaths. In addition, West Nile infection was identified in one horse and four dogs.

Most people infected with West Nile virus experience no symptoms or have only mild symptoms such as fever and headaches. More severe infection may result in high fever, severe headache,

-- more --

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@state.nd.us

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

stiff neck, altered mental state and death. Although the elderly are more likely to have severe infections, anyone who develops severe symptoms should consult a physician.

The best protection against West Nile virus infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. People are encouraged to take the following protective measures:

- Use insect repellents containing ingredients registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin – and apply according to manufacture’s instructions.
- Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (such as buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact Michelle Feist or Tracy Miller, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/wnv.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.