



KANKAKEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

Subject: Mosquitoes positive for West Nile virus in Limestone

VILLAGE OF LIMESTONE MOSQUITOES POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

One pool of mosquitoes found in the Village of Limestone, in Kankakee County, has been confirmed to test positive for West Nile virus (WNV).

This is the first pool of mosquitoes to test positive for WNV this year in Kankakee County. There have not been any birds to test positive for WNV to this date. As of this date, in the State of Illinois, 20 counties have WNV positive birds and/or mosquitoes, and no counties have had a human test positive for WNV. Last year 61 counties in Illinois reported a West Nile virus positive mosquito batch, bird and/or human case. A total of 152 Illinois residents contracted West Nile virus disease, and 4 died. Also in 2016, in Kankakee County, there were 10 mosquito batches; birds and humans were not infected with the West Nile virus. The Kankakee County Health Department stresses that the public should be aware of the presence of WNV in this area as well as anywhere else in Kankakee County. The Department will continue its surveillance for the presence of WNV.

Because the virus is present in Kankakee County, it is recommended that individuals take a number of precautions to reduce contact with mosquitoes:

- Whenever outdoors between dusk and dawn, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Loose-fitting, light colored clothing is best.
- When it is necessary to be outdoors, apply insect repellent as indicated on the repellent label.

The more DEET a product contains, the longer the repellent can protect against mosquito bites. However, concentrations higher than 50 percent do not increase the length of

protection. For most situations, 10 percent to 25 percent DEET is adequate. Other approved repellants include picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. Apply repellents to clothes whenever possible; apply sparingly to exposed skin if label permits. Consult a physician before using repellents on young children.

- Check residential screens, including porches and patios, for tears and other openings and repair, as necessary, to prevent mosquito entry.
- Eliminate stagnant water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles in which mosquitoes might breed.

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 3 to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Infections can be mild and include fever, headache, and body aches, or can be severe and marked by headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis and, rarely, death. Serious WNV illness is most often present in individuals 50 years of age or older.

Kankakee County's 2017 surveillance for WNV began June 1 and includes collecting dead crows, blue jays, cardinals, robins and mourning doves. The county also collects mosquitoes for testing for WNV. Citizens who see sick or dying crows, blue jays, cardinals, robins or mourning doves should contact Kankakee County Health Department, Environmental Health, at 815-802-9410, who will determine if the bird is eligible to be picked up for testing. Other surveillance for the presence of WNV includes activity in mosquito vectors, birds, horses, other animals and humans, and recommendations for appropriate preventive control measures – "larviciding" or treatment of mosquito production sites – to reduce mosquito populations when necessary.

Horse owners also should take precautions to minimize exposure of their animals to mosquitoes. A vaccine to protect horses from West Nile virus became available in 2001. While susceptible to the virus, horses are not known to transmit the disease to other horses or to humans.

The Culex or house mosquito, which can carry WNV or the St. Louis encephalitis virus, breeds in warm, stagnant water and will begin to increase in numbers early in the summer.

Since 1999, WNV has been detected in 48 states, with human cases reported in most of those states; no cases were reported from Alaska. Throughout the country in 2016 a total of 2,038 human cases of West Nile virus disease have been reported to CDC and 94 deaths were recorded in the United States, with California reporting the highest number of cases and deaths.

Additional information about WNV can be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/animal-pest-control>. The Illinois Department of Public Health's WNV hotline number is 1-866-369-9710.

The best way to prevent West Nile encephalitis and other mosquito-borne illnesses is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and neighborhood and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites by practicing the 3Rs for protection against mosquitoes:

- **REDUCE** the number of mosquitoes and get rid of containers outside that hold water;
- **REPEL** mosquitoes by using insect repellent;
- **REPORT** area where water sits for more than a week

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