

DATE: October 18, 2017 **END DATE:** November 30, 2017

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RE: West Nile Virus Activity

A house sparrow that was collected in Genesee County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This is the first positive report of WNV activity in Genesee County this year. In 2017, more than 200 Michigan birds have tested positive for West Nile virus from many counties throughout the state. Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) wants to remind residents that the most effective way to protect against West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

A person may contract West Nile virus through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitos can spread the virus to humans and other animals. The risk of infection is highest for individuals who work outside and participate in outdoor activities as there is greater exposure to mosquitos.

Most people bitten by a WNV-infected mosquito show no symptoms of illness. However, some people develop symptoms such as headache, fever, confusion, or muscle weakness. WNV can also cause more serious neurological illnesses, such as meningitis and encephalitis and can have long-term health consequences. Individuals 60 years or older as well as people with weakened immune systems are more susceptible to severe WNV disease symptoms.

How to prevent WNV and mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellents when going outdoors. For longer-lasting protection, choose repellants containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products.

- Wear long sleeves and pants during peak mosquito-biting hours, which are from dusk to dawn.
- Install or repair screens on doors and windows to help keep mosquitos out of buildings. Use air conditioning when possible.
- Help reduce the number of mosquitos around your home. Once a week, empty and scrub containers that can hold standing water such as flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires, and birdbaths. Mosquitos lay eggs near water.

GCHD wants you and your family to stay up-to-date on the most recent information and surveillance regarding West Nile virus. For more information about West Nile virus please visit our website at www.gchd.us. Additional information can also be found at www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus and www.cdc.gov/westnile.

Your Health. Our Work.

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