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Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

West Nile Virus Detected in northwest St. Joseph County

No human cases reported: Exposure Precautions Recommended

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency announced today that the West Nile virus has been detected in a crow found in northwestern St. Joseph County; this is the first evidence of West Nile detected in the county. The detection was based upon recent laboratory testing conducted by the MSU Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. Ongoing public and animal health surveillance for the virus has NOT detected any cases of West Nile virus in humans in Michigan.

West Nile virus was first identified in Michigan at the end of August 2001 and was expected to be seen again this year.

The virus is transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitoes. It can not be spread from person to person contact or directly from birds to people. Therefore there are simple ways to minimize risk.

- Apply insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET to exposed skin or clothing as directed by the manufacturers directions (follow label recommendation for children under 2)
- Maintain window screens to keep mosquitoes out of buildings.
- Drain standing water in the yard. Empty mosquito breeding sites such as buckets barrels, cans, clogged rain gutters or discarded tires.
- Avoid activities in areas where there are a large number of mosquitoes present.

Horse owners are encouraged to contact their local veterinarian to discuss appropriate preventive measures. Tips for horses include:

- Using approved insect repellents to protect horses
- Placing horses in stables or barns during prime exposure hours of dawn and dusk.
- Eliminate standing ground water at least twice per week
- Consult with your local veterinarian about the use of available approved vaccine.

Other facts to consider:

- Most persons infected with the virus have no symptoms.
- 1 in 4 infected persons will have mild illness with fever, headache and body aches, rash and swollen lymph glands.
- Encephalitis is far less common. Symptoms include: headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness and paralysis.
- Death is extremely rare.
- The virus is NOT transmitted from person to person, horse to horse, or horse to person.

For additional information please visit our website at www.bhsj.org or the Michigan Department of Community Health at www.wnv.state.mi.us