

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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First Human West Nile Case Reported for 2016

COLDWATER, MI – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has confirmed the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) reported in Michigan for 2016. The person is an older adult and resides in Livingston County.

“We are tracking a number of mosquito born infections this year,” said the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency’s Health Officer, Rebecca Burns. “This case is just another reminder that it’s important to protect ourselves against mosquito bites now and not wait.”

Surveillance for West Nile Virus in Michigan includes laboratory tests on mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile Virus-like symptoms. People who observe a sick or dying crow, blue jay, robin or other perching bird should contact their local health department, which can determine if the bird should be sent for testing.

West Nile Virus is transmitted through the bite of a *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, which has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common symptoms include: fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. Four out of five people infected with West Nile Virus will not show any symptoms. However, in rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile Virus.

To date, 13 birds have tested positive for WNV so far this season, and 3 WNV positive mosquito pools have been detected in Oakland and Saginaw counties. Infected birds and mosquitoes can provide an early warning of WNV activity in a community.

Burns adds “This information highlights the importance of taking simple precautions that can help you avoid mosquito bites.” Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – remove, repel, and repair:

- **Remove** standing water around your home in pet bowls, flower pots, old tires, baby pools and toys and remove leaves and debris from gutters so water doesn’t accumulate. Pools of water that stagnate for three or four days can become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- **Repel** mosquitoes when outdoors by applying insect repellent with DEET and wear light, loose fitting clothing.
- **Repair** or replace torn screens on doors and windows.

The health department will continue to provide updates on WNV on its website as more information becomes available. It also offers FAQ sheets about this disease and many others, including information regarding transmission, symptoms and treatment options. Check out our FAQs by visiting our website at <http://www.bhsj.org> and clicking on the button at the top of the left side bar titled ‘Quick Info About Health Topics.’

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