



"Your Local
Health Department"

NEWS RELEASE

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Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

570 N. Marshall Road
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561
Fax (517) 278-2923

20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395
Fax (517) 437-0166

1110 Hill Street
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161
Fax (269) 273-2452

www.bhsj.org

Rebecca Burns, Health Officer
517-279-9561 ext. 0148#

Paul Andriacchi, Environmental Health Director
517-279-9561 ext. 0229#

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Nile Virus in St. Joseph County

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has notified the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency that a horse in St. Joseph County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This is one of 13 horses that have tested positive for WNV so far in Michigan in 2017. The other Counties in Michigan with WNV positive horses include Clinton, Livingston, Jackson, Mecosta, Midland, Missaukee, Montcalm, Osceola, Ottawa, Roscommon, and Wexford. WNV is a mosquito-borne disease and poses a risk for people and animals in Michigan. "Horse owners are reminded to vaccinate their horses to prevent WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalitis which are both mosquito-borne diseases," states Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the Community Health Agency.

On August 31st, the MDHHS released information about 4 human cases of WNV; 2 residents of Montcalm County and one resident each from Oakland and Macomb Counties. Their illness onsets ranged from August 6-11, and all had been hospitalized with neurologic disease. The current human probable and confirmed case count in Michigan is 16. Michigan residents can learn more about 2017

WNV activity by visiting the MDHHS Emerging Disease website at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

West Nile virus can affect anyone but people 50 years of age and older are more likely to get more severe form of West Nile virus illness. This virus is carried by certain types of Mosquitoes in Michigan and can also be seen in horses and birds especially crows, ravens and blue jays; risk of bites from infected mosquitos is highest for people who work outdoors.

Most people who are infected with the virus will show mild or no symptoms. If someone experiences symptoms, it's usually between three to fifteen days after being bitten. Mild symptoms of West Nile virus include a fever, confusion, muscle weakness and severe headache. More serious complications include neurological complications such as meningitis and encephalitis. If you experience serious symptoms as a result of the West Nile virus, contact your health care provider. Last year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 2,038 human cases of the virus and 94 deaths nationally. This year a total of 148 birds have tested positive for West Nile virus from 44 of Michigan's 83 counties. Michigan residents can stay healthy by using the following strategies:

- Use nets or fans over outdoor eating areas.
- Apply insect repellents containing DEET or EPA-approved products; oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products provide longer lasting protection.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors or when mosquitoes are active.
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors.

For more information about how to protect yourself from the West Nile virus, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus. To learn more about services provided by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency "Your Local Health Department", visit our website at www.bhsj.org and like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC/.