



"Your Local
Health Department"

Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Nile in Michigan

Coldwater, MI – The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has been notified that as of August 29, throughout the state 69 birds submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Disease Laboratory have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). In addition, the MDHHS reports 16 human cases and two deaths attributed to WNV. “The positive results mean that residents of the tri-county area need to be vigilant in their measures to prevent mosquito bites,” says Paul Andriacchi, Director of Environmental Health.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected birds. “Residents should be aware of West Nile Virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Andriacchi added. “The best way to avoid the disease is to reduce exposure to and eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes.”

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency recommends the following:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent like DEET to clothing, as well as exposed skin, since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are intact to prevent mosquito entry.
- Properly dispose of items that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage.

- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

August is the peak month of WNV activity in Michigan, so as many are looking forward to all of the outdoor activities that fall brings, applying insect repellent before going outside can help assure that you and your family are protected from WNV.

The majority of people who are infected with West Nile virus do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash, and fatigue. Less than 1% of people infected with the virus get seriously ill with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, confusion, paralysis, and coma. Older adults (age 50+) and those with compromised immune systems are at greater risk of developing a central nervous system illness that could be fatal.

If you have questions about West Nile Virus or other mosquito-borne diseases, please visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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