



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
&  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

## For Immediate Release

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News media calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

### HEALTH DEPARTMENT ALERT FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

**JOLIET** – The Will County Health Department warns area residents to expect a bumper crop of floodwater mosquitoes early this summer.

Health Department Executive Director John Cicero says Will County received approximately 18 inches of rain from March 1, through May. He knows wet conditions provide an ideal breeding environment for mosquitoes, but adds that floodwater mosquito species are not typically associated with the transmission of West Nile Virus (WNV), or other infectious diseases.

“We would expect to get approximately 10 inches of rain during the three spring months,” Cicero said. “All of the excess rain we’ve received this year will certainly result in lots of mosquitoes. Fortunately, the mosquitoes typically associated with West Nile Virus flourish in hot, dry weather.

“We’re already monitoring mosquitoes for West Nile Virus, but we do know that we usually don’t see human cases of the disease until the weather turns very hot and dry. In the meantime, mosquitoes will pose a significant nuisance because there will be lots of them around.”

According to the NOAA Midwestern Regional Climate Center (Champaign), Will County received 5.63 inches of rain during March, 5.13 inches in April, and 7.34 inches in May. The excess precipitation ranks the spring of 2009 among the wettest ever.

Will County Environmental Health began monitoring local mosquitoes for the presence of West Nile Virus May 25. The Health Department operates seven mosquito monitoring sites across the county, and samples from each site are tested twice weekly. Environmental Health also monitors birds for the presence of WNV, a potentially serious condition responsible for 1,586 cases of human disease and 99 Illinois fatalities since 2002.

“It’s impossible to predict whether WNV will be a significant problem this year,” Cicero added. “History tells us that we can expect human cases if weather conditions are favorable. It’s important that area residents take steps now to protect themselves against mosquito bites.”

Mosquitoes found at two Cook County monitoring sites have already tested positive for WNV. Samples tested from traps in Evanston and Wilmette were announced as WNV-positive by the Illinois Department of Public Health June 1. Will County was one of 28 Illinois jurisdictions to report WNV activity last year.



**Public Health**  
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Area residents are urged to protect themselves against mosquitoes by wearing long sleeves, pants, shoes and socks when spending time outdoors. Mosquito repellent containing DEET is also recommended. Always read label instructions before applying mosquito repellent.

The Will County WNV Hotline (815-740-7631) is available 24 hours daily for area residents who wish to report dead birds. The Health Department will collect a limited number of dead birds and submit them to the state for WNV testing.