



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
&
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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Agency Website: www.willcountyhealth.org

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT ACTIVATES WEST NILE VIRUS INFORMATION LINE, MOSQUITO MONITORING PLANNED

JOLIET — May marks the beginning of the West Nile Virus season across Illinois.

County residents can help to minimize the potential for West Nile Virus (WNV) transmission to humans by reporting dead birds to the Will County Health Department. Will County's WNV Information Line is now available 24 hours daily, for individuals wishing to report dead birds that can help identify the potential for human infections. The newly updated service is accessible at 815-740-7631.

Launched in May, 2002, the Information Line enables area residents to access the latest information concerning WNV, report the location of dead birds, and talk to a Health Department representative about the disease during regular weekly business hours. Will County Environmental Health uses dead bird reports to monitor potential WNV hot spots and identify other possible trends requiring Health Department intervention.

Adult crows and blue jays have long been testing priorities, but the Illinois Department of Public Health will accept 14 bird species for laboratory analysis. Other birds suitable for testing include: robins, finches, grackles, sparrows, wrens, swallows, and cardinals.

"WNV poses potential health risks for everyone," according to Will County Environmental Health Director Elizabeth Bilotta. "We are interested in the location of dead birds because that information is one way we are able to assess the potential for local virus activity. Dead bird monitoring and testing has traditionally been a critical part of the statewide WNV surveillance initiative."

The Health Department will collect a limited number of reported dead birds and submit them to the state for analysis. You can view pictures of bird testing priorities by visiting the Environmental Health page at www.willcountyhealth.org.

State funding needed for WNV surveillance activities conducted in Will County, and across Illinois, awaits a budget resolution in Springfield. However, Will County Environmental Health expects to operate at least

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three mosquito monitoring sites this summer. The monitoring sites are tentatively planned for Joliet, Bolingbrook, and University Park.

WNV is a mosquito-borne disease capable of producing encephalitis and meningitis, potentially fatal inflammations of the brain and spinal cord. Residents can minimize personal risk by avoiding outdoor activity at dusk and near dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.

Wearing light-colored long sleeves and eliminating potential mosquito breeding sites on your property can also reduce personal risk. Residents are also advised to use insect repellent containing DEET, or other chemical compounds that deter mosquitoes when spending time outdoors.

Through May 10, 2011, human WNV activity had been reported in 40 states for the 2010 season. There were 981 total cases and 45 national fatalities reported a year ago.

The state of Illinois has reported at least 1,642 human WNV infections and 102 fatalities since 2002. The state totals include 54 Will County cases and two local fatalities.