# Monitoring West Nile Virus In Wisconsin

The Department of Health and Family Services has monitored the spread of West Nile virus since 2001. The surveillance program monitors wild birds, horses, mosquitoes, and humans for West Nile virus.

Wisconsin began testing dead wild birds (crows, blue jays and ravens) for West Nile virus in 2001. If you find a dead bird, call the

**West Nile Virus Hotline**
**1-800-433-1610**
**or**
**contact your local health department**
**or**
**DNR office.**

Make note of the date of the dead bird sighting, the bird species, the number of birds, and the address of the sighting (address, city, zip code). If birds are being collected for testing, use gloves or inverted plastic bags to collect and contain carcasses. Birds suitable for testing are those that have died recently (within the previous 24 hours) and show no obvious signs of decomposition. There is no evidence humans become infected with West Nile virus by handling dead birds but sanitary precautions should be taken.

# More Information on West Nile Virus

## FROM THE INTERNET

**Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services:**

http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dph_bcd/westnilevirus/

http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/eh/MosquitoControl/index.htm

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:**

http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/whealth/issues/wnvbackground.htm

**Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection:**

http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/arm/environment/insects/west-nile/

## OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Public Health
Bureau of Communicable Diseases
PO Box 2659
Madison, WI 53701-2659
PPH 42107 (Rev. 08/03)

Mosquito images complements of US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

*Fight the Bite*

# West Nile Virus in Wisconsin

# What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne infection that can cause serious illness, was found in Wisconsin beginning in 2001. It was first identified in the United States in 1999.

In nature, the virus cycles between birds and mosquitoes. It is only when a mosquito infected with the virus bites a person instead of a bird that people become exposed to this virus. As the mosquito season progresses, more mosquitoes are infected with the virus increasing the risk that people being bitten by mosquitoes can become infected with the virus.

Most people infected with West Nile virus do not become ill. Symptoms can occur 5 to 15 days after exposure. About 20% of people infected with the virus have mild to moderate symptoms such as: a fever with headache, body ache, a skin rash, and swollen lymph nodes. Less than 1% or about 1 out of 150 people become severely ill with symptoms that can include: severe headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, tremors, coma or paralysis. Approximately 10% of the cases of severe illness are fatal. People over 50 years of age are at increased risk of severe disease.

There is no specific treatment for West Nile virus other than to treat symptoms and offer supportive care. If you think you have a West Nile Virus infection, contact your physician.

# Prevention is the Key

## *Fight the Bite*

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent West Nile virus infection. Taking an active role to decrease exposure to mosquitoes and the infections they may carry can reduce your chances of bites:

- Make sure your home window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry.
- Limit time spent outdoors at dawn and dusk during mosquito season (June to September) or other times mosquitoes are active.
- Wear shoes, socks, long sleeve shirts and long pants when outdoors.
- Use an insect repellent when outdoors.

## Use Repellents Safely!

- Choose a product that meets your needs for the time you will be outdoors and the amount of mosquito activity.
- Use repellent products according to directions on the label.
- Spray repellents sparingly and only on exposed skin or on top of clothing.
- Do not apply repellents in a confined space.
- Do not apply repellents to children's hands or allow them to apply repellents.
- Wash treated skin when protection is no longer needed.
- The most effective repellents contain DEET. Products containing up to 30% DEET are considered safe in routine control of ticks and mosquitoes in adults and children over two months of age.
- No adverse effects from DEET use have been reported in pregnant or lactating women

# Stop Raising Mosquitoes in Your Yard!

All mosquitoes need water to lay their eggs and complete their life cycle. Reducing or eliminating standing water reduces potential breeding sites, mosquito numbers and the risk for mosquito bites. The following steps should be taken:

- Dispose of water-holding cans and containers.
- Remove discarded tires.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of recycling containers kept outdoors.
- Ensure that gutters and downspouts are clean and drain properly.
- Change birdbath water regularly.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, boats, and wading pools when not in use.
- Aerate ornamental pools and water gardens and stock them with fish that eat mosquito larvae.
- Drain water from pool covers.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs and cover when not in use.
- Prevent water from collecting in low-lying areas on your property.
- Use yellow "bug" lighting outdoors.