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CROOK COUNTY BIRD TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

Contact:

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Crook County Health Department (CCHD) reports that a dead Steller Blue Jay found in Prineville has tested positive for the presence of West Nile virus. The bird was found in the area on September 23 and was sent to Veterinary Diagnostics Lab at Oregon State University for testing.

“This was inevitable because of the reported presence of West Nile virus in other parts of Oregon,” said Wendy Perrin, Public Health. “And, we’ve been assuming it has been present here. The confirmation that it has finally arrived might increase anxiety about the virus for some people. But, it is important to evaluate our risk properly and to recognize that we can all take precautions and protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites and remove mosquito breeding sources from our property. Also remember that only one person in five who tests positive for WNV remembers having been ill. One in 200 infected people progress to encephalitis (brain inflammation).”

West Nile Virus normally lives in birds. It is spread when a mosquito feeds on an infected bird and then bites a human. Birds cannot transmit the disease to humans, nor can it be transmitted through person-to-person contact.

Infections can range from mild to more serious, with fever, headache and body aches, possibly with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. More severe infections may cause West Nile encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) marked by headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, seizures and, rarely, death. Persons 50 years or older appear to have the highest risk of severe illness.

Source reduction, the most effective type of mosquito population control, is the process of removing or modifying larval habitats to make them unsuitable for larval development. Examples of source reduction include eliminating pools of standing water and emptying containers that can hold water. Citizens will play a large role in the source reduction process in populated areas. They must be educated as to how mosquitoes breed, what source reduction activities are, and prevention activities they can take to protect their families and their animals. They will also play a role in identifying infected birds and areas of high mosquito populations.

Crook County Public Health’s West Nile Virus Response

- Crook County Health Department (CCHD) has in place a response system for the reporting of unusual diseases, clusters and patterns of diseases, and other conditions. The communicable disease team follows up on these cases.

- CCHD is taking reports only of dead crows, magpies and blue jays. Dead birds of a continuous die off from Post, Paulina and Powell Butte zip codes will be submitted for testing. The bird must look like it died of natural causes (no apparent injuries or accidental death) within 24 hours. To report a bird meeting these criteria, call the health department at 541.447.5165.
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The best protection is prevention.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Look around your home and property and eliminate sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, for example gutters, birdbaths and old tires.
- Because mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk, avoid playing or working outside at these times or wear repellent and/or clothing that covers your skin.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.
- Wear an effective insect repellent. So far, DEET has been found to work the best. Follow label directions when using any repellent. For children 2 months to 2 years the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC advises to apply low concentrations of DEET(e.g.10%).
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes. Don't leave doors open without a screen.

For more information about West Nile virus:

- Crook County Health Department (CCHD) 541.447.5165
- Oregon Department of Health Services (DHS) toll-free line 1-866-703-4636.
- DHS Website: <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/acd/wnile/index.cfm>
- CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>
- AAP: <http://aap.org/family/wnv-jun03.htm>