

For Immediate Release 10/04/04

BENTON COUNTY BIRD TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

Contact:

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Benton County Health Department (BCHD) reports that a dead crow found in Corvallis has tested positive for the presence of West Nile virus. The bird was found in the area on September 30 and was sent to Veterinary Diagnostics Lab at Oregon State University for testing.

West Nile Virus first appeared in New York City in 1999 and has been steadily moving westward ever since, said Bill Emminger of Environmental Health. The mountain ranges to the East have delayed the arrival of WNV, but it was only time before it reached Benton County. We can all take precautions to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites. Also remember that only one person in five who tests positive for WNV remembers having been ill. One in 150 infected people progress to encephalitis (brain inflammation).

Testing is being done to document the arrival of West Nile Virus in the state and is being tracked by zip code. The crow that tested positive for West Nile Virus was found in the 97330 zip code. Once a positive result has been obtained, no additional testing for that zip code will be done.

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.

Benton County Public Health's West Nile Virus Response Benton County Health Department (BCHD) 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. BCHD is taking reports only of dead crows, magpies and blue jays. Dead birds of a continuous die off may 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 541-766-6841. Testing is being done to document the arrival of West Nile Virus by zip code. Once a positive result has been obtained, no additional testing for that zip code will be done.

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: Benton County Health Department (BCHD) 541-766-6841

Oregon Department of Health Services (DHS) toll-free line 1-866-703-4636.

DHS Website: <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/acd/w Nile/index.cfm>

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

AAP: <http://aap.org/family/wnv-jun03.htm>

As a reminder - - for reports or questions concerning unusual infectious disease outbreaks, local health department staff should call the State Acute and Communicable Disease and Prevention (ACDP) staff in Portland at 503-731-4024 during regular business hours, or at 503-731-4030 after hours.