

PRESUMPTIVE HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN KLAMATH COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The Klamath County Health Department has been notified of a presumptive human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection. The person, a man in his 70's, is currently hospitalized. Tests confirming the diagnosis will be conducted at the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory in Portland.

If confirmed, it would be the first human case of WNV infection in Klamath County.

Testing by Klamath Vector Control has already yielded two WNV-positive mosquito pools this year, and both horses and birds have tested positive for the virus since 2004.

"We are, of course, very concerned for this patient and his family," stated Marilyn Sutherland, director of Klamath County Health Department. "Though the diagnosis is presumptive at this time, we felt it was important to notify the public that they need to take precautions against the virus." This is the peak time for WNV transmission, Dr DeBess an epidemiologist with the Oregon Department of Health Services.

West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquito. It is not transmitted through person-to-person contact, nor can it be transmitted directly from birds.

According to the Oregon Public Health Division, so far this year Oregon has reported six confirmed human cases, 28 mosquito pools, 16 infected birds, five infected horses and nine sentinel chickens. Most of the activity has been in Eastern Oregon.

Sutherland said there are basic steps people can take to avoid mosquito bites:

- Wear long pants, long-sleeve shirts and other protective clothing while outdoors.
- Make sure screen doors and windows are in good repair.
- Eliminate all standing water where mosquitoes can breed, such as bird baths, gutters, flower pots, etc.
- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, typically dawn and dusk.

- Use an effective repellent, one containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, particularly when applying to small children.

Most people infected with West Nile virus have no illness or experience only mild symptoms. About 20 percent of cases have a flu-like illness with fever, and only about one in 150 cases experience inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).

More information about West Nile virus can be found on the Klamath County webpage at: www.co.klamath.or.us/HealthDept/Index.htm or by calling (541) 882-8846.

The Oregon State Public Health Division also has a toll-free WNV information hotline for recorded information in English and Spanish at (866) 703-4636, and their website is: www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/wnile.shtml.