



HORSE IN WEXFORD COUNTY TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

District Health Department #10 provides tips for prevention

August 21, 2017 - Michigan Department of Health and Human Services recently notified District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) that a horse tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This horse is from Wexford County, and is one of seven horses to test positive for WNV statewide this year. Currently, 42 counties in Michigan have had one or more birds test positive for WNV, including Mecosta County from the DHD#10 area.

“West Nile Virus continues to be a risk in Michigan and has been present in the state for over ten years”, states Tom Reichard, Director of Environmental Health Services.

People and animals can be exposed to WNV by the bite of a mosquito. WNV is not spread from person to person. Symptoms occur in only 1 in 5 people infected and may include: mild illness with fever, headache and body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. More serious illness occurs in 1 out of 150 infected and is more likely to occur in those over 60 years of age; it usually presents as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord). Horses that are infected often do not have symptoms. Those that do can have weakness, paralysis, coma, and even death. Of those that survive, 10% to 20% will have a permanent disability of some kind.

Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for DHD#10 states, “In Michigan, mosquitos are not only responsible for transmitting the West Nile virus, they can also transmit St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern equine encephalitis, and the California group of encephalitis viruses that includes La Crosse encephalitis.” The overall risk of getting a mosquito transmitted disease is very low, but because the illness could become life threatening, precautions should be taken. Persons who experience high fever, severe or unusual headaches, neck stiffness, seizures or other unusual symptoms should seek medical care as soon as possible. Prevention tips include:

- Avoid activities in areas where large numbers of mosquitoes are present.
- Wear long sleeves when outdoors, especially at dusk and at dawn.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain the active ingredient DEET. When applying DEET to young children, spray DEET on a cloth, and then wipe it on a child’s skin so that the eyes and hands are not sprayed. The Environmental Protection Agency has a website that can help you find a repellent that is right for you. Find the right repellent here: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>
- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Whenever you use an insecticide or insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the label for use. NOTE: Vitamin B and “ultrasonic” devices are NOT effective in preventing mosquito bites.



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COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford
Kalkaska
Lake
Manistee
Mason
Mecosta
Missaukee
Newaygo
Oceana
Wexford



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- Drain standing water in your yard or cover it with sand. Empty water from potential mosquito breeding sites including flowerpots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires, buckets, cans, and similar items in which mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Empty bird baths every week.
- Make sure your window screens are kept in good repair and that all doors are shut tightly.
- Keep your lawn mowed.
- Horse owners are encouraged to have their horses vaccinated against WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses; currently, there are no vaccines available for humans.

WNV is most commonly found in crows, ravens, blue jays and starlings. If you find a dead bird it can be reported at: <https://secure1.state.mi.us/ORS/Survey/4> . By reporting dead birds, you can help experts determine when WNV risk is increasing. A rapid rise in dead bird numbers precedes an increase in risk to humans.

More information about mosquito-borne diseases and other emerging diseases can be found at: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.

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