

NEWS RELEASE

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First 2016 Case of West Nile Virus Reported in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) has confirmed the first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) disease in North Dakota this year. Additionally, two crows and one mosquito pool from Grand Forks County and one crow from Richland County have tested positive for WNV. To help avoid contracting the virus, state and local health officials urge people to protect themselves from mosquito bites.

The first case of 2016 is a female in her 30s who resides in Grand Forks County. The patient was not hospitalized for her illness. In 2015, the NDDoH received reports that 23 people tested positive for West Nile virus. Of those 23, eight were hospitalized and one died. West Nile infection was also identified in three horses.

“It is important that everyone protect themselves from mosquito bites. It’s especially important for those at higher risk of severe complications such as people over age 50 and those with other medical conditions,” said Laura Cronquist, epidemiologist with the NDDoH. “This holiday weekend, many people will be outside during times when the mosquito that spreads West Nile virus is most active. Make sure to wear repellent when outdoors during the evening between dusk and dawn.”

NDDoH recommends residents take these precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellents containing ingredients registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus (or PMD) or permethrin – and apply according to manufacturer’s instructions
- Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (such as buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools, and birdbaths)
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed

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The common symptoms of West Nile virus include fever, headache, body aches, and rash. People with more severe illness may experience symptoms such as stiff neck, confusion, paralysis, coma, and even death. Fortunately, most people infected with West Nile virus develop the less severe form of the disease or experience no symptoms at all.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact Laura Cronquist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/wnv.

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