

NEWS RELEASE

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First West Nile Virus-Related Death Reported in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) announced today the state’s first West Nile virus-related death in 2018. The individual was a man, over 60 years old, who resided in the northwest region of North Dakota.

Most people infected with West Nile virus (WNV) experience no symptoms or have only mild symptoms, such as fever and headache. In more severe types of infection, the virus can cause high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, altered mental state, and death. People with these symptoms should see a health care provider immediately.

“People older than 60 years, or those who have underlying health issues, are at the greatest risk of developing a severe illness due to WNV infection. The individual’s death is a tragic reminder of how dangerous WNV can be,” said Jenny Galbraith, an epidemiologist with the NDDoH.

As of September 17, 148 human WNV cases have been reported in 28 counties. Forty-five of those individuals were hospitalized. In 2017, North Dakota had 62 cases and two West Nile virus-related deaths.

WNV transmission usually peaks in late summer in North Dakota. As the year progresses, people may be inclined to skip mosquito protection. However, until there is a hard frost to eliminate the remaining mosquito population, people should continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites. The NDDoH recommends the following precautions:

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR 3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin and apply to clothing when outdoors. Always follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label.

- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- When possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts while outside.
- Eliminate stagnant water and leaf debris in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (e.g., buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep mosquitoes from entering your home by repairing screens in windows and doors.
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

For more information about WNV, visit www.ndhealth.gov/wnv or contact Jenny Galbraith, NDDoH, at 1.800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

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