



Public Health

West Nile Virus Detected in Umatilla County, Oregon

For Immediate Release:
July 27, 2009

Contact: Ron J. Montgomery, Manager
West Umatilla Vector Control District
541-567-5201

Genni Lehnert, Administrator
Umatilla County Public Health Division
541-278-5432

Mosquito samples from several locations presumed positive.

West Nile Virus has been detected in live mosquitoes trapped in several locations in Umatilla County, Oregon, Umatilla county officials said today. Testing at the Oregon State University Animal Diagnostic Lab in Corvallis, Oregon is expected to confirm the results later this week. This is the first detection of the virus in Umatilla County this year.

“West Nile has been detected in our neighboring counties, so we have been expecting to find it here as well,” said Ron Montgomery, manager of the

West Umatilla Vector Control District. “We have a good surveillance system in place and it worked exactly as it was supposed to.”

The infected mosquitoes were collected from Hat Rock State Park, Cold Spring National Wildlife Refuge, and near the Hermiston Wastewater Treatment Facility, as part of the districts routine arbovirus surveillance program. Field tests conducted at the district lab yielded positive results. The samples were then delivered to Corvallis for final confirmation, according to Montgomery.

Residents in these areas can expect to see an increase in mosquito control operations based on the positive samples. “Ultra Low Volume (ULV) applications of insecticides from truck mounted sprayers will be used to reduce mosquito populations” said Montgomery. These applications will typically be made after sunset when mosquitoes are most active. All applicators are licensed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. No aerial applications over residential areas are currently planned. “Aerial resources are on standby status and will be utilized if widespread detection of West Nile virus occurs” Montgomery said.

He encouraged people to continue submitting dead birds for testing so the district can track the spread of West Nile in Oregon.

West Nile is primarily a bird disease, and some birds, including magpies, blue jays and crows are especially susceptible. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on an infected bird and can pass the virus to humans, horses or other hosts when they bite, Montgomery said.

“Most people who become infected with West Nile Virus do not become ill,” said Genni Lehnert, administrator of the Umatilla County Public Health Division. “Some may develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally swollen lymph glands or a rash. In rare cases West Nile may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Individuals with severe or unusual headaches should seek medical care as soon as possible.”

There have been no human or horse cases of the West Nile virus reported in Oregon.

“The risk of West Nile is low but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” said Lehnert. She offered the following suggestions to reduce the risk of exposure to West Nile:

- Get rid of old tires and other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito infested areas.
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, making sure to follow the directions on the container.
- Screen doors and windows.

Because horses are also at risk for West Nile, Montgomery encourages horse owners to check with their veterinarians for vaccination. Veterinarians can arrange for testing of samples from horses suspected of infection with West Nile virus.

Since West Nile Virus was first discovered in New York in 1999, the West Umatilla Vector Control District, in conjunction with CDC and the Oregon Department of Human Services have tested over 100,000 mosquitoes collected in Umatilla County for the virus. Many local and state agencies as well as private volunteer groups are participating in the surveillance effort with the West Umatilla Vector Control District.

Local officials and health care providers in Umatilla County have been notified of the virus detection.

The State of Oregon has set up a West Nile Virus Hotline at 1 (800) 703-INFO. Additional information on West Nile is on the Web at:

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>

Oregon Department of Human Services -
<http://www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/acd/wnile/index.cfm>

Umatilla County

<http://www.co.umatilla.or.us>

West Umatilla Vector Control District

<http://www.wuvcd.org>

###