



Public Health

West Nile Virus Detected in Hermiston

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For Immediate Release:

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West Nile Virus has been detected in a robin in Hermiston, Oregon, Umatilla County officials said today. Testing at the Oregon State University Animal Diagnostic Laboratory in Corvallis, Oregon confirmed the virus.

“The robin was collected at the City of Hermiston’s Riverfront Park last week and submitted to the West Umatilla Vector Control District as part of the districts routine arbovirus surveillance program”, said Ron Montgomery, Manager of the West Umatilla Vector Control District. Robins are not normally selected for West Nile Virus testing, but this particular bird was observed showing signs of neurological distress. Field tests conducted at the district lab yielded inconclusive results. The robin was then delivered to

Corvallis for additional testing and final confirmation, according to Montgomery.

“West Nile is primarily a bird disease, and robins are known to be 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 West Nile Virus reported in Umatilla County this year. Last year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 69 confirmed human cases in Oregon as well as 996 human cases in Idaho.

“Vector Control staff will increase surveillance activities in several areas around Riverfront Park as well areas along the Umatilla River that contain stagnant pools of water where mosquitoes tend to develop” said Montgomery. “It is impossible to determine where the robin was exposed to the virus”.

“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.

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>

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