Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

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To: Local Media

From: Central Michigan District Health Department

RE: West Nile Virus and Mosquitos

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West Nile Virus

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) has been notified by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services that West Nile Virus (WNV) is being detected in the mosquito and bird population in Michigan. Conditions have been good for mosquito development this summer. With an abundance of mosquitos, the possibility of mosquito-borne disease increases. While WNV is the *most prevalent* mosquito-borne disease in Michigan, mosquitos can also transmit St. Louis encephalitis, Eastern equine encephalitis, and the California group of encephalitis viruses that includes La Crosse encephalitis. Zika Virus, another mosquito-borne disease, is not present in Michigan because the mosquito that transmits Zika is not currently found in Michigan.

Infected mosquitos can transmit WNV to animals, birds, and humans. 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).

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.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase pretreated clothing, which will repel mosquito and other insects through multiple washes.
- Drain 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.
- Make sure your window screens are kept in good repair and that all of your doors are shut tightly.
- Keep your lawn mowed to reduce hiding places for mosquitos.

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.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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