



ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE



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Mosquito Carrying West Nile Virus Found in St. Clair County

State Reports First Human Case

Mosquitos carrying West Nile virus (WNV) were found in St. Clair County by the St. Clair County Health Department and East Side Health District. These are the first mosquito batches that tested positive for WNV this season.

WNV first emerged in the United States in the New York metropolitan area in the fall of 1999. Since then, the virus, which can be transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito, has quickly spread across the country.

To date, 11 out of 102 counties in Illinois have reported positive mosquito samples or West Nile positive birds. Last year, 63 counties reported West Nile virus positive mosquito samples or positive birds. In the 2017 mosquito season, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) reported 90 human cases, one in St. Clair County.

On June 20, 2018 IDPH reported the first confirmed human case of WNV in Illinois. A Chicago resident in her mid-60s became ill in mid-May. Symptoms of WNV are uncommon, but can include fever, nausea, headaches and muscle aches. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death can occur.

WNV is transmitted through the bite of a *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, which has picked up WNV by feeding on an infected bird.

Birds are an important sentinels for detection of WNV activity. The St. Clair County Health Department and East Side Health District are encouraging residents to report **ALL** dead perching birds such as the crow, blue jays, grackles, starlings, sparrows, finches, robins, cardinals flycatchers, swallows, catbirds, mocking birds, warblers and wrens to the St. Clair County Health Department at (618) 233-7769. To see pictures of the birds collected, visit the [St. Clair County Health Department website](http://www.health.co.st-clair.il.us).

Residents of East Side Health District, which includes Centreville, Canteen, Stites and East St. Louis townships should contact the East Side Health District at (618) 271-8722 extension 538.



Dead birds will be collected from areas across the county, but only a limited number of birds will be selected for testing. The following is a list of the criteria that must be met for a bird to be selected:

- The bird must have died within the last 24 hours.
- Samples can only be submitted to the health department Monday - Thursday before 2 pm.

The best way to prevent WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses is to reduce the number of mosquitos around your home and neighborhood and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Health officials recommend the following precautions to help control mosquito-breeding areas and reduce the risk of mosquito-borne disease:

- Remove or empty water in old tires, tin cans, buckets, drums, bottles or other places with standing water.
- Clear rain gutters and downspouts.
- Empty plastic wading pools at least once a week and store indoors when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths and plant pots or drip trays at least once a week.
- Cover boats when not in use or turn them upside down to prevent water from pooling.
- Empty your pet's water bowl every day.
- Level the ground around your home so water can run off and not collect in low spots. Fill in any holes or depressions in your yard that could accumulate water.
- Keep weeds and tall grass cut short; adult mosquitos look for these shady places to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Maintain aeration unit discharges to prevent stagnant water.

Remember to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites. There are several methods of personal protection including:

- Avoid places and times when mosquitos bite. Generally, the peak biting periods occur at dawn and dusk.
- Be sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair.
- Wear appropriate clothing. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants made of tightly woven materials keep mosquitos away from the skin.
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure to protect small babies.
- Check to see if your mosquito repellent contains DEET. Repellents containing about 25-30 percent DEET work best for adults; use lower concentrations for children. When outdoors, apply repellent sparingly to exposed skin or clothing, as indicated on the label.