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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEAD BLUE JAY TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

First Washtenaw County Case Indicates Active Transmission of Virus

YPSILANTI, Mich., September 26, 2007—A dead blue jay found on September 14 in the 48105 ZIP code has tested positive for West Nile virus, the first laboratory evidence of the virus in Washtenaw County this season. Until now, seven dead birds (crows and blue jays) have been tested in Washtenaw County, none of which has tested positive for the virus. It is unusual for the County's first West Nile positive bird to be detected this late in the year, since the virus typically is found in dead birds by June or July. Last year, 12 Washtenaw County birds tested positive for the West Nile virus.

No human cases have yet been reported in Washtenaw County residents for 2007. Statewide, seven human cases have been confirmed, with no deaths reported. Risk for West Nile transmission remains high as long as mosquitoes are active, which is usually until the first hard frost of the season.

"We encourage clinicians to continue testing for and reporting West Nile infection, since we know the virus is circulating in the area," said Laura Bauman, Washtenaw County Public Health Department Epidemiologist. "We also urge people to continue taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites," she said, "particularly in places heavily infested with mosquitoes. Once the virus is found repeatedly in birds, human infections are likely to follow."

Nationally, as of September 25, there were 2,307 human cases of West Nile virus with 58 deaths reported. In 2006 there were 4,256 human cases and 165 deaths. Michigan accounted for 55 human cases in 2006, with seven deaths reported. Washtenaw County had one human case, with no deaths. As in 2005, most of the human cases in 2006 occurred in Wayne and Kent counties.

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Mosquitoes become infected with West Nile virus when they feed on infected birds that carry the virus in their blood. People are primarily exposed to West Nile from the bite of a mosquito that is infected with the virus. The presence of dead crows, blue jays, robins, and ravens is a sensitive indicator for the presence of the West Nile virus.

Most people infected with West Nile virus do not have any symptoms of illness, but one in four will become ill 3-15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. In a few cases, mostly among the elderly, death may occur. Mild illness from West Nile can include these symptoms: Slight fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes a skin rash and swollen glands. Serious illness from West Nile can include these symptoms: High fever, severe headache, stiff neck, mental confusion, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis.

Personal Protection and Prevention

Since West Nile virus is spread to humans almost exclusively through the bite of an infected mosquito, it is important for individuals to prevent mosquito bites through the following prevention activities:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active (dawn and dusk).
- Wear light colored clothing, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants, if possible.
- Apply insect repellent that contains the active ingredient DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to exposed skin or clothing. Always following the manufacturer's directions for use. DEET repellent can be used on children 2 months of age and older.
- Avoid applying repellent to the hands of young children who may then transfer the repellent to their eyes and mouth, which has the potential of producing irritation or adverse health effects.
- Take care when opening doors so that mosquitoes don't "hitch a ride" into the house on you, your children, or your pets.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes out of homes and other buildings.
- Empty standing water from buckets, flowerpots, saucers, pools, patio furniture covers, and other similar sites where mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Remove wet, organic material from your gutters and from low-lying areas in your yard.
- Keep tall weeds trimmed back from areas where you or your children spend time outdoors.

For more local West Nile information, visit: <http://westnile.ewashtenaw.org>

For more statewide West Nile information, visit: www.michigan.gov/westnile

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