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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT BEGINS SURVEILLANCE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

Public Urged to Prevent Mosquito Bites and Use Hotline to Report Dead Birds

YPSILANTI, Mich., June 10, 2010 - Washtenaw County Public Health Department officials today announced they have begun surveillance activities for the seasonal West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne virus that can cause mild-to-severe illness in humans and other animals. County residents are urged to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites and to call the **Washtenaw County West Nile Virus Hotline** at **(734) 544-6750** to report dead birds or to receive general West Nile virus information.

“Although the past two summers have been mild, and Washtenaw County has not had a human case reported since 2006, West Nile virus is endemic and has the potential to become more active again,” said Dr. Diana Torres-Burgos, Washtenaw County Medical Director. “Individuals can help us protect the public’s health by reporting dead birds in their area, taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites, and supporting community-based mosquito control programs.”

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.

Nationally, cases of West Nile virus decreased in 2009, with 720 human cases and 32 deaths. Michigan accounted for one human case, with no deaths. Washtenaw County had no human cases.

Most people infected with West Nile virus do not have any symptoms of illness, but one in five will become ill 2-15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. 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. In a few cases, mostly among persons 75 years and older, death may occur.

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Fax: (734) 544-6706
Communicable Disease

Fax: (734) 544-6704
Administration

Fax: (734) 544-6705
Public Health

HEARING IMPAIRED: (734) 994-1733

WEB ADDRESSES: <http://www.ewashtenaw.org>

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>



Dead Bird Surveillance

The presence of dead birds, especially crows, blue jays, and ravens, is a sensitive indicator for the presence of West Nile virus. The Washtenaw County Public Health Department asks citizens to report all dead birds to the Washtenaw County West Nile Virus Hotline at (734) 544-6750. Washtenaw County will not be testing any birds for West Nile virus this year.

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, oil of lemon eucalyptus/PMD, or IR3535 to exposed skin or clothing. Always follow the manufacturer's directions for use. DEET repellent can be used on children 2 months of age and older.
- Avoid applying insect 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.

More information about West Nile virus is available on the following county, state, and national websites:

- <http://westnile.ewashtenaw.org>
- www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus
- www.cdc.gov/westnile

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