

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Three Birds Test Positive for West Nile Virus in Washtenaw County**

Washtenaw County received a report on July 1, 2004 that three dead crows have tested positive for West Nile virus. The first crow was found in Sharon Township (48158) on 6/22/04; a preliminary test result on 6/23/04 was confirmed positive on 6/28/04. The second crow was found in Dexter (48130) on 6/27/04 and tested positive on 6/29/04. The third crow was found in Ann Arbor (48105) on 6/29/04 and tested positive on 6/30/04. There have been no reported cases of West Nile virus in humans, horses, or other animals in Washtenaw County at this time.

The presence of crows that are laboratory positive for West Nile virus in three different zip code areas clearly indicates that there is active transmission of the virus taking place between mosquitoes and susceptible birds throughout our community. Based on analysis of experience with West Nile virus transmission during previous years, the virus is presumably multiplying within the bird and mosquito cycle. According to Dr. Stan Reedy, Medical Director at Washtenaw County Public Health, "The real significance of viral multiplication at this point in the summer is that it warns us of an increased possibility of transmission to humans." Dr. Reedy further stated that "With the onset of warmer weather and a holiday weekend, with people spending more and more time outside, everyone must give attention to personal protection from mosquito bites, and community-based protective actions should continue, in order to prevent the occurrence of human cases."

**Dead bird surveillance.** The presence of dead crows, blue jays and ravens is a sensitive indicator for West Nile virus activity. Washtenaw County's local hotline continues to take calls from citizens reporting sightings of dead birds. Testing of recently dead crows, blue jays and ravens from zip codes other than 48158, 48130 and 48105 will also continue.

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Once a zip code has a test-positive bird, birds will no longer be accepted for testing from that zip code. However, residents should still report sightings of dead crows, blue jays and ravens in all zip codes, since the birds will be counted and mapped to predict the level of virus activity in a particular geographic area. The local hotline number is **(734) 544-6750**.

Once a dead bird has been reported, safely dispose of the bird. Always avoid barehanded contact when handling any dead bird. Use disposable gloves to put the dead bird in a double plastic bag. If gloves are not available, invert a plastic shopping bag, scoop up the bird with the bag, tie off the bag and place the bagged carcass in an outdoor garbage container for disposal. One may also use a shovel to pick up the bird and bury it in a location where pets and other animals will not come into contact with the carcass.

**Mosquito control.** The Washtenaw County West Nile Task Force has again recommended that local units of government institute a mosquito abatement program that emphasizes public education and source reduction. It is important to reduce mosquito breeding sites such as drains, tires and discarded containers. Consultation is available for individuals and communities on source reduction and other methods to reduce exposure to the virus. Some local communities have applied, or are in the process of applying larvicides to catch basins within their jurisdiction. The number for Environmental Health is: **(734) 222-3869**

**Personal protection.** West Nile virus is spread to humans almost exclusively through the bite of an infected mosquito. There will continue to be a strong focus on educating the public on the many ways to reduce the risk of becoming infected by minimizing exposure to mosquitoes. Actions include:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active (dawn & dusk).
- Wear light colored clothing, long-sleeved shirts & long pants, if possible.

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- Apply insect repellent that contains the active ingredient DEET to exposed skin or clothing, always following the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Avoid applying DEET repellent to children less than 2 months of age.
- Avoid applying repellent to the hands of young children who may then transfer repellent to their eyes and mouth, which has the potential of producing irritation or adverse health effects.
- Take care when opening doors 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, pool & patio furniture covers and other similar sites where mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Clean gutters and low lying areas in your yard of wet, organic material.
- Keep tall weeds trimmed back from areas where you, or your children, spend time outdoors.

Washtenaw County has a comprehensive plan to address West Nile Virus. The plan includes surveillance of human disease, dead birds, sick horses and infected mosquitoes; educational efforts within the health care community and health alerts to local residents regarding risk reduction behaviors and other prevention activities.

“The involvement of local health care providers, veterinarians, clinics, hospitals, laboratories and the general public is invaluable in assuring that we can effectively respond to West Nile virus in Washtenaw County”, asserts Ellen Clement, Health Officer for Washtenaw County Public Health.

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

[www.ewashtenaw.org](http://www.ewashtenaw.org)

[www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus](http://www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)