



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Fourth Dead Bird Tests Positive for West Nile Virus in Washtenaw County

Washtenaw County Public Health received a report on August 5, 2004 that a dead blue jay submitted from the 48197 zip code in Ypsilanti tested positive for West Nile virus. The blue jay was found on July 29th, was approved for testing and submitted to the State lab. This is the fourth positive bird identified in Washtenaw County for the 2004 West Nile season. The first three positive birds (crows) were found in late June in the 48158, 48130 and 48105 zip codes.

The presence of a positive blue jay in a fourth county zip code indicates active transmission of West Nile virus throughout our community. Most likely the level of intensity of transmission is still low. However, August and September are the months when human cases of West Nile virus are most common, so individuals should continue to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites. To date, there has been only one human case reported in Michigan (Kalamazoo) in 2004.

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 dead crows, blue jays and ravens from zip codes other than 48158, 48130, 48105 and 48197 will also continue. Once a zip code has tested positive, 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, as 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**.

(More)

Mosquito control. The Washtenaw County West Nile Task Force has recommended that local units of government institute a mosquito abatement program that emphasizes public education and source reduction. Consultation is available for individuals and communities on these and other methods to reduce exposure to the virus. 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. Prevention activities include:

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

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

www.ewashtenaw.org

www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus

www.cdc.gov