



## WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**July 30, 2012**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Washington County Crow Positive for West Nile Virus**

The Washington County Health Department reports a dead crow found in Washington County on July 16, 2012 has tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first bird testing positive for West Nile virus in Washington County since surveillance for the mosquito-transmitted virus began May 1.

“The positive bird means that residents of Washington County need to be more vigilant in their personal protective measures to prevent mosquito bites,” Linda Walter, Health Officer said.

West Nile Virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on infected birds.

“Washington County residents should be aware of West Nile virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Walter said. “The West Nile virus seems to be here to stay, so the best way to avoid the disease is to reduce exposure to and eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes.”

The Washington County Health Department recommends the following:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing as well as exposed skin since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry.
- Properly dispose of items that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

The majority of people (80%) who are infected with West Nile Virus do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, and fatigue.

Less than 1% of people infected with the virus get seriously ill. Older adults (age 50+) and those with compromised immune systems are at greater risk of developing severe disease that can be fatal including encephalitis, meningitis, paralysis, and coma.

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of West Nile virus since 2001 among wild birds, horses, mosquitoes, and people. In 2002, the state documented its first human infections, with 52 human cases. In 2011, there were three human cases of West Nile virus.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health will continue surveillance for West Nile virus until the end of the mosquito season. To report a sick or dead crow, blue jay, or raven, please call the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

For more information on West Nile virus: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/westNilevirus/>

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