

Mosquito Management

P R O G R A M

West Nile Virus

Human Infection

State of

CONNECTICUT

The State's mosquito monitoring and management program is a collaborative effort involving the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Public Health (DPH), The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), Department of Agriculture (DOA) and the University of Connecticut Department of Pathobiology (UCONN). The program is coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The State of Connecticut began a mosquito management and virus testing program in April, 1997 in response to the 1996 isolations of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in mosquitoes. Thirty-seven permanent trap site locations statewide were selected to trap mosquitoes for virus testing and a contingency plan was developed and implemented for EEE.

In 1999, with the unexpected appearance of West Nile Virus (WNV) in North America, the State's Mosquito Management Program incorporated mosquito and bird testing for WNV into its existing program. In 2000, the state developed and implemented a surveillance and response plan for WNV and expanded the permanent trap site locations to 73 statewide.

Has West Nile virus been found in Connecticut?

In 1999, West Nile virus was found in two species of mosquitoes trapped in Greenwich and in the brain tissue of many crows in coastal Connecticut from Greenwich to Madison. Most of the crows had evidence of encephalitis.

Have there been any human cases of West Nile fever in Connecticut?

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has asked physicians to report suspect cases of West Nile fever admitted to the hospital to the DPH so that testing for West Nile virus can be done. In 1999, 78 persons were tested in Connecticut. None were positive.

What is West Nile fever?

West Nile fever is a mosquito-borne viral infection that can cause inflammation of the brain. It is named after the West Nile district of Uganda where the virus was first isolated in 1937. The viruses that cause West Nile fever and St. Louis Encephalitis come from the same family of flaviviruses, and cause diseases that are similar to one another.

How do people get West Nile fever?

West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes (primarily the *Culex* species). A mosquito is infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. West Nile virus is not spread by person-to-person contact, or directly from birds to persons.

What are the symptoms of West Nile fever?

Most people who are infected have no symptoms or may experience mild illness such as a fever and headache before fully recovering. In some individuals, particularly the elderly, West Nile virus can cause serious disease that affects the central nervous system. At its most serious, it can cause permanent neurological damage and can be fatal. Symptoms generally occur 5-15 days following the bite of an infected mosquito, and range from a slight fever, headache, rash, swollen nodes and conjunctivitis (irritation of the lining of the eye) to the rapid onset of a severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, muscle weakness, coma, or death.

Who is at risk of contracting West Nile fever?

Anyone can become infected with the virus. However, the very old are more likely to become ill and develop serious symptoms when infected.

If I live in an area where birds with West Nile virus have been reported and I am bitten by a mosquito, am I likely to get sick?

No. Even in areas where mosquitoes do carry the virus, very few mosquitoes (usually less than 1 out of 500) are infected. The chance that one mosquito bite will be from an infected mosquito is very small.

If bitten by an infected mosquito, will I get sick?

If bitten by an infected mosquito, your chances of developing illness are roughly one in 300.

If bitten, should I be tested for West Nile virus?

No. Most mosquitoes are not infected with the West Nile virus. Illnesses related to mosquito bites are rare. However, you should see a doctor immediately if you develop symptoms such as high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, or severe headaches. Patients with mild symptoms are likely to recover completely, and do not require any specific medication or laboratory testing.

Is there a treatment for West Nile fever?

Although there is no specific treatment, medication or cure, the symptoms and complications of the disease can be treated. Most people who get this illness recover from it.

Is there a vaccine for West Nile fever?

No vaccine for West Nile fever exists.

What should I do if I find a dead bird?

If the bird is found between mid-April and the end of October and appears to have died of natural causes, you should report the “sighting” to your local health department. Your local health department will share this information with the Department of Public Health and, if it appears that birds, especially crows, are dying at an unusual rate in your town, some dead birds will be collected for testing for West Nile virus and other possible causes of bird deaths.

Where do I call if I need more information on West Nile fever?

Call your local health department or the Connecticut Department of Public Health at (860) 509-7994 for more information on West Nile fever.

Mosquito Management Program Information:

Department of Environmental Protection

Website- <http://dep.state.ct.us>

(860) 424-4184 - *Latest information on test results, spray locations, protective measures.*

(860) 642-7630 - *Technical questions regarding mosquitoes, mosquito control measures.*

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Website - <http://www.state.ct.us/caes>

(203) 974-8500 - *Mosquito trapping.*

Department of Public Health

Website - <http://www.state.ct.us/dph>

(860) 509-7994 - *WNV infections in people.*

(860) 509-7742 - *Effects of pesticides on people.*

Department of Agriculture

Website - <http://www.state.ct.us/doag>

(860) 713-2505 - *WNV infections in domestic animals, including livestock, poultry, and pets.*

Call your local health department to report dead birds. You can find the number in the blue pages of your local phone book.

This brochure was written by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health, for the Mosquito Management Program.



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