



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ohio's First Human Cases of West Nile Virus Reported for 2014

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio's first two human cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in 2014 were identified Tuesday by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). A 24-year-old female in Muskingum County and a 78-year-old female in Cuyahoga County have been hospitalized with encephalitis.

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain and is caused when someone is bitten by an infected mosquito. This is the primary way people get the West Nile Virus.

"We could possibly see a growing number of human cases of the West Nile Virus infection and positive mosquito samples throughout the state," said ODH State Epidemiologist Dr. Mary DiOrio. "Ohioans should remain vigilant and take all reasonable precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites."

ODH began accepting mosquitoes for identification and testing from our local cooperating agencies starting July 14. We are up to 120 positive West Nile Virus mosquito samples tested by the ODH lab plus another 10 positives reported by local health departments. The relatively low infection rates may be influenced by the low temperatures and rainfall this year.

"As infection rates are expected to increase, it is important to remind everyone to avoid mosquito bites and eliminate breeding sites," said Dr. DiOrio.

Here are some tips to avoid possible infection from mosquito bites:

- If you are outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active, be sure to wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, shoes and socks.
- Light colors are least attractive to mosquitoes.
- Use insect repellent and follow the label directions.

Here are some tips to eliminate mosquito breeding sites near your home:

- Remove water-holding containers, such as tin cans and unused flower pots.
- Eliminate standing water.
- Make sure all roof gutters are properly draining and clean.
- Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

Approximately 80 percent of people who are infected with West Nile Virus do not show any symptoms at all, but there is no way to know in advance if you will develop an illness or not. Those who do develop symptoms usually do so between three to 14 days after they are bitten by the infected mosquito.

Learn more about the West Nile Virus on the ODH website at; www.odh.ohio.gov/wnv.

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