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News Release

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ODH Reports 2013's First Human Case of West Nile Virus

2013 surveillance produces fewer positive tests for WNV

COLUMBUS – Ohio's first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in 2013 was identified today by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). A 72-year-old female in Cuyahoga County is currently hospitalized with WNV meningitis.

"We've seen human cases of West Nile virus each year in Ohio since 2002 but it is encouraging that our counts are down compared to where we were a year ago," said ODH Director Ted Wymyslo, M.D. "Ohioans are doing their part to avoid mosquito bites and we continue to work with local health departments around the state to monitor West Nile Virus activity."

Prior to 2013, the ODH public health laboratory received federal funding to test mosquitoes for WNV. Federal funding cuts forced a change in program and ODH is now working with several local health departments in different regions of the state to conduct mosquito surveillance and testing. These surveillance and test results are shared with ODH and are [available online](#).

According to the data, acquired through the mosquito surveillance partnerships, the percent of mosquitoes that tested positive is ten times less this year than it was during the same time in 2012. Also, in 2012 the first human case was confirmed on July 27, nearly a month earlier than normal for Ohio ([see past WNV case releases](#)).

ODH has also created resources to make it easier to spread the word about preventing mosquito bites including public service announcements and [brochures](#) that can be distributed throughout communities in Ohio.

"You can protect yourself and your loved ones from West Nile Virus by taking simple preventive steps such as using insect repellent and eliminating containers that can collect water from your property," said Dr. Wymyslo.

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.

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To eliminate mosquito breeding sites near your home:

- Eliminate standing water from your property.
- Remove all discarded tires and other water-holding containers, such as tin cans and unused flower pots, from your property.
- Make sure all roof gutters are clean and properly draining. Clean and chlorinate pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs. Keep them empty when not in use and drain water from pool covers.
- Change water in bird baths weekly.

WNV can have no symptoms, or can lead to West Nile fever or severe West Nile disease.

- Most people (about four out of five) who are infected with WNV will not develop any type of illness. However, you cannot know ahead of time if you'll get sick or not when infected.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that about 20 percent of people who become infected with WNV will develop West Nile fever. Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. While the illness can be as short as a few days, even healthy people have reported being sick for several weeks.

CDC estimates that approximately one in 150 persons infected with WNV will develop a more severe form of disease such as West Nile encephalitis or meningitis or West Nile poliomyelitis:

- Severe symptoms include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis.
- Serious illness can occur in people of any age, however people over age 50 and those with medical conditions (for example, transplant patients) are at the highest risk for getting severely ill when infected with WNV.

Ohio has recorded human cases of WNV each year since 2002 when there were 441 cases. Historical case counts are located on the [ODH website](#).

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