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WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN BIRD FROM KENT COUNTY

The Michigan Department of Community Health today confirmed that a dead crow found in Kent County has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), the first specimen from Kent County to test positive for the virus this year. Ongoing public and animal surveillance for the virus has not detected any cases in horses or humans in Kent County, nor in all of Michigan.

Kent County Health officials say they were not surprised that an infected bird had been found, and had expected to see West Nile Virus in Kent County -- especially after infected birds were found Allegan County. To date, there have been 12 WNV-infected birds found in seven Michigan counties -- including the one in Kent County -- according to the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Dead bird specimens are submitted to the state health department by zip code. Once a WNV-infected bird has been identified in a particular zip code, no additional specimens from that zip code will be tested. The infected Kent County bird was found in the 49503 zip code. Three additional bird specimens from Kent County have been submitted to the state from different zip codes; results of those tests are pending.

The Kent County Health Department continues to conduct dead bird surveillance, and is asking people to report dead birds -- especially dead crows or blue jays, which are known to be particularly susceptible to West Nile Virus. Dead bird reports can be made online at the Health Department's WNV web site at www.accesskent.com/westnile, or by calling the Health Department at (616) 632-7100. So far this year, the Health Department has received 375 citizen reports of dead birds in Kent County.

Dead crows, blue jays, or other birds can be disposed of by burying them, or placing them in a sealed plastic trash bag in the garbage. People should avoid touching any dead bird with their bare hands and instead use a shovel to remove the bird, and use work gloves or rubber gloves to cover their hands. People should also wash their hands after having any such contact, especially before eating. **People are asked not to bring dead birds to the Health Department.**

Additional information on West Nile Virus can be found on the Kent County Health Department's West Nile Virus web site at www.accesskent.com/westnile

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