

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2004

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FIRST CONFIRMED CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN KENT COUNTY

The Michigan Department of Community Health on Tuesday confirmed the first case of human West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in Kent County for 2004. The patient, a 13 year old male, was hospitalized, released in stable condition and has returned to school. This is the third confirmed West Nile Virus case in Michigan this year. Previous cases have been confirmed in Kalamazoo and Wayne counties. There were no confirmed cases of West Nile Virus infection reported in Kent County during 2003. Sixty cases, including 4 deaths, were reported in 2002.

According to Dr. Mark Hall, Medical Director for the Kent County Health Department, "West Nile Virus is now considered endemic and some level of infection in humans, birds, and mosquitoes can be expected every year." In 2004, the first case of a dead crow infected with WNV in Kent County was reported on June 10.

West Nile Virus is spread by infected mosquitoes. While most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms, up to 20% may develop mild illness and one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness which can be fatal.

To prevent West Nile Virus infection, the Kent County Health Department recommends the following:

- Use insect repellent containing 10-35% DEET for adults and concentrations 10% or less for children. Always read and follow manufacturers' label directions when applying insect repellent as most are not recommended for use on children under two years of age. When applying repellent to children, please remember to avoid spraying directly onto their face by first spraying it onto your hands and then rubbing the repellent onto the child's face.
- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening, when mosquitoes are active.
- Wear light-colored long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors, but especially in wooded or wetland areas.
- Make sure window and door screens are maintained in good condition to keep mosquitoes out of buildings and homes.
- Drain standing water around yards, decks, and other outdoor areas around the home. Flower pots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires, buckets – anything that can hold standing water – is a site in which mosquitoes can lay eggs. Change water in bird baths every three to four days (twice a week).
- Avoid activities in areas where large numbers of mosquitoes are present.

More Information

The Health Department's West Nile Virus web site is an excellent resource for information about the disease. The site contains fact sheets, an online slideshow presentation, current Health Department WNV news releases, and links to other WNV sites. The address is www.accesskent.com/westnile.