



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Aug. 7, 2012

For More Information, Contact:
Michelle Feist or Alicia Lepp
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: mafeist@nd.gov or
alepp@nd.gov

First West Nile Virus Case Reported in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today announced the state’s first human case of West Nile virus for 2012, according to West Nile Virus Program Manager Michelle Feist.

The patient is a male in his 50s who resides in Dickey County. This first case developed the more serious form of West Nile virus and required hospitalization for his illness.

“This case is a reminder of the seriousness of West Nile virus, especially for people older than 50 and those with weakened immune systems,” said Michelle Feist. “Although the risk of serious illness to most people is low, everyone is at risk of developing West Nile virus infection after being bitten by an infected mosquito.”

In addition, West Nile activity has been detected in six people identified through blood donor screening (Ransom (2), Cass, Barnes, Sargent and LaMoure Counties) and three horses (Cass, Burleigh and McIntosh Counties). People identified through blood donor screening are not counted as West Nile virus cases because they do not have symptoms. Fortunately, 80 percent of people bitten by an infected mosquito do not get sick. However, the detection of West Nile virus in blood donors, horses and other animals is an indication that West Nile virus transmission is occurring in the state.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, the state health department recommends the following protective measures:

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR 3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin when outdoors. Always follow the directions on the manufacturer’s label.
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- When possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts while outside.

– more –

- Eliminate stagnant water and leaf debris in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (e.g., buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep mosquitoes from entering your home by repairing screens in windows and doors.
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

In 2011, four human cases of West Nile virus were reported to the Department of Health. In addition, West Nile infection was identified in one horse and six dogs.

The common symptoms of West Nile virus include fever, headache, body aches and rash. People with more severe illness may experience symptoms such as stiff neck, confusion, paralysis, coma and even death. Fortunately, most people infected with West Nile virus develop the less severe form of the disease or develop no symptoms at all.

West Nile virus activity will be updated Wednesday mornings each week throughout the West Nile virus season on the Department of Health's West Nile virus website at www.ndhealth.gov/wnv.

For more information, contact Alicia Lepp or Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 1.800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

Note: The Department of Health's Policy for Release of Information Concerning West Nile Virus Cases is included on the next page for your information.

– 30 –

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.

Policy for Release of Information Concerning West Nile Virus Cases

The North Dakota Department of Health strives to protect the identity and the privacy of people who are infected with diseases, including West Nile virus, while at the same time protecting the public's health. The following list identifies the information the Department of Health will release to the media and/or public concerning West Nile virus cases.

West Nile Virus Cases

- Number of cases per county
- Number of males and females statewide
- Number hospitalized statewide
- Number of cases by age group statewide
 - Younger than 10
 - Ages 10 to 19
 - Ages 20 to 29
 - Ages 30 to 39
 - Ages 40 to 49
 - Ages 50 to 59
 - Age 60 and older

West Nile Virus Deaths

- Region of the state in which the person resided
- Age group of the person
- The person's gender
- If the person had any underlying medical conditions

Information about a West Nile virus death will be released only after the department has consulted with the patient's health-care provider and after the provider has communicated with the patient's family. The local public health unit in which the person resided also will be notified prior to release of information.

If you have any questions, please contact Stacy Eberl, North Dakota Department of Health Office of Public Information, at 701.328.2372.

Communication policy developed 2002; updated 2006.