



Jeff Nelson, R.S. Environmental Health Director
100 W. Broadway, Suite 31
Montesano WA 98563
(360) 249-4413

News Release

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CONTACT: Jeff Nelson, R.S.
(360) 249-4413

West Nile virus detected in Grays Harbor County crow

The Grays Harbor County Health Department announced today that West Nile virus has been detected in a dead crow in Aberdeen. This is the first detection of the virus in a bird in Grays Harbor County.

"West Nile virus has been detected in mosquitoes, birds, and horses all over Washington State, so we have been expecting to find it here as well," says Dr. John Bausher, the county's Health Officer.

"We have a good surveillance system in place and it worked exactly as it was supposed to," said Bausher.

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease, and crows are especially susceptible. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on an infected bird and can pass the virus to humans, horses or other hosts when they bite. Bausher said most people who become infected do not become ill. Some may develop mild illness with fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally swollen lymph glands or a rash. In rare cases West Nile virus may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Individuals with severe or unusual headaches should seek medical care as soon as possible. So far, there have been no human cases of West Nile acquired in Grays Harbor County, although 17 cases have been reported from other parts of Washington State.

"The risk of West Nile is low but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites," said Bausher. He offered the following suggestions to reduce the risk of exposure to West Nile:

- ❖ Get rid of old tires and other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- ❖ Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- ❖ Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito infested areas.
- ❖ Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, making sure to follow the directions on the container.
- ❖ Screen doors and windows, and make sure they're fitted and working properly.

For additional information please contact Grays Harbor County Environmental Health at

(360) 249-4413.

To report a dead bird, call (360) 532-8631 ext. 410.