

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Michele Bever, PhD, MPH, Executive Director
Jessica Warner, MPH, Health Surveillance Coordinator
402-462-6211 or toll free at 1-877-238-7595

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West Nile Season Not Over Yet

Early signs of fall are upon us, but West Nile season is not over yet.

“West Nile Virus infections occur primarily in the late summer or early fall,” said Jessica Warner, disease surveillance coordinator for South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD). “Sometimes cases are reported as late as November.”

According to Warner, residents of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties have been fortunate overall as reports of potential West Nile Virus infections seem to be less than average in the South Heartland counties this year. “However, we did receive lab reports this year indicating that people had past infections,” she said.

Individuals may also learn they are infected with West Nile Virus through the screening process during blood donation. “We typically receive one or two reports on positive blood donors every season and we have had one report so far in 2018,” Warner said.

According to Warner, these individuals usually do not know they are infected, as only about 20% who are infected experience symptoms.

“West Nile Virus is considered to be endemic in Nebraska, so the best defense against it is prevention,” said Michele Bever, SHDHD executive director. Dr. Bever explained that West Nile Virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. “Mosquitoes are most active from dusk to dawn,” she said. “The best way to fight back is to use an insect repellent with DEET any time you will be outside.”

Symptoms of a West Nile Virus infection can include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes a rash on the chest, stomach and back. These symptoms typically last a few days. Approximately one in one hundred and fifty people will develop severe illness. These symptoms can include high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, paralysis, coma, and death. These symptoms may last several weeks and the neurological effects can be permanent.

The health department recommends that residents practice the four D’s of West Nile Virus prevention:

- Avoid being outside **Dusk to Dawn**, when mosquitoes are most active
- If you must be outside, use insect repellent with **DEET**
- **Dress** in long pants, socks and long sleeves when you are outdoors
- Homeowners should **Drain** standing water around their homes to disrupt the breeding cycle of mosquitoes

West Nile Virus infection is preventable, according to Dr. Bever. “Following these simple precautions, you and your family can reduce your chances of mosquito bites and avoid diseases, like West Nile Virus, which can be carried by mosquitoes,” she said.

For more information call South Heartland District Health Department at 402-462-6211 or toll-free at 1-877-238-7595 or visit the SHDHD website: www.southheartlandhealth.org.

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