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For Immediate Release

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## **West Nile Virus: Positive Mosquitos Reported in SWNPHD Health District**

A pool of mosquitos in Red Willow County have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) according to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. This follows two confirmed positive WNV human cases in the health district.

“People get West Nile Virus from an infected female mosquito bite and our concern is that the virus has no vaccine,” states Melissa Propp, RN, Surveillance Nurse at SWNPHD. “I encourage residents to prevent getting mosquito bites with personal protection and making adjustments to their surroundings.” West Nile Virus is not limited to the locations which have positive tested pools of mosquitos.

“We will not be collecting dead birds due to our positive WNV pool, but please call us with the species of bird, date and location of your dead bird for our continuing surveillance efforts,” explains Propp. She can be reached at 308-345-4223 or email: [nurse@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:nurse@swhealth.ne.gov).

People with medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension and kidney disease are also at greater risk for serious illness with the West Nile Virus. “If you think a family member might have West Nile Virus, consult your healthcare provider for a diagnosis,” explains Propp. “Prevention is the best way to avoid WNV and DEET in your repellent is the most effective.”

An additional protection measure is to utilize mosquito dunks in standing water that cannot be eliminated. It is a natural mosquito larvicide. It kills mosquito larvae but is harmless to birds, fish, wildlife and pets. Mosquito dunks typically last 30 days and can be purchased at retail stores.

Please remember these precautions with DEET:

- Do not allow children under 10 years of age to apply repellent themselves
- Do not apply to young children’s hands, mouth or around eyes
- Do not breath in, swallow, or get into the eyes
- Do no put repellent on wounds or broken skin
- Read and follow all directions & precautions on the product label
- Store DEET out of reach of children
- To apply to face, first spray product onto hands, then rub onto face
- Use only when outdoors and wash skin with soap and water after coming indoors
- Higher concentrations of DEET may have a longer repellent effect, but concentrations over 50% provide no added protection

Risk of West Nile Virus infection is highest for people who work outside or participate in outdoor activities because of greater exposure to mosquitos. Outbreaks have been occurring every summer since 1999 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Propp offered the following tips to prevent mosquito bites:

- ✓ Limit time outside from dusk till dawn
- ✓ Wear long-sleeves and keep your pants on
- ✓ Repair all holes in screens
- ✓ Dump stagnant water and keep your gutters clean
- ✓ Be sure to use insect repellent with DEET and repeat every four (4) hours

More information on West Nile Virus may be found at our web site [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) or call the McCook office at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street – one block north of Arby's. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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