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For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus: Positive Mosquitos Reported in SWNPHD Health District

Mosquitos in Chase 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 and making adjustments to their surroundings.” West Nile Virus is not limited to the locations which have positive tested mosquitos.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Most people (70-80%) who become infected with West Nile virus do not develop any symptoms.
- About 1 in 5 people who are infected will develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Most people with this type of West Nile virus disease recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months.
- Less than 1% of people who are infected will develop a serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues). These symptoms can include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, seizures, or paralysis.

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.”

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 CDC.

“We will not be collecting dead birds due to our positive report, but you can 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.

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.

More information on West Nile Virus may be found at our web site www.swhealth.ne.gov or call the McCook office at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th 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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