

August 16, 2017

For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus: Basic Information and Updates

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department continually reminds residents to take precautions from getting bitten by mosquitoes while outdoors. The severity of West Nile virus (WNV) came to the attention of public health officials in approximately 1999. From 1999 to 2015, the Center For Disease Control (CDC) recorded a total of 43,937 cases with 1,911 resulting in death. Nebraska has a total of 3,893 cases since 2002 and 68 deaths.

“Public health monitors the status of reportable diseases daily. West Nile Virus is one of many of the reportable diseases. Part of our job is to investigate where the person came into contact with the disease. We do this through interviews with the patient, patient family and/or medical provider,” explains Melissa Propp, Surveillance Nurse. “Most people who contract West Nile virus don’t get sick but those who do can be severely ill or even die.”

Typical symptoms include fever, headache, body aches and rash, in severe cases WNV can invade the brain and spinal cord leading to stiff neck, confusion, paralysis, coma and even death. The best way to prevent West Nile Virus is to prevent getting bitten by a mosquito.

Propp offered the following tips to prevent mosquito bites:

- ✓ Limit time outside at dawn and from dusk till midnight when Culex mosquitos, the primary carrier of WNV in Nebraska, are most active
- ✓ Wear pants and long-sleeves in the evening
- ✓ Repair all holes in screens
- ✓ Get rid of standing water that gives mosquitos a place to breed
- ✓ 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 or by calling the McCook office at 308-345-4223 or Imperial office at 308-882-4269. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street – one block north of Arby’s in McCook. The Imperial office is located at 501 Broadway. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

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