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For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus Infected Mosquitos at High Level in Southwest Nebraska

McCook – Rain is producing bumper crops and now some of the highest levels of mosquitoes infected with the West Nile Virus in Nebraska. Mosquito trapping conducted by the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) in Red Willow County has confirmed 10 positive pools for West Nile Virus. According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), this is a very high number of infected mosquitos with over 1000 mosquitoes trapped and the risk for West Nile Virus has become even higher for area residents.

“Red Willow County is one of the top four counties in Nebraska for positive West Nile Virus mosquito pools, explains Dr. Tom Safranek, NDHHS Epidemiologist. This is a ‘hot spot’ for mosquitos and we want residents to take this information seriously with the increased potential to contract the West Nile Virus in the next couple of weeks as the number of mosquitoes peaks.”

A human case of West Nile Virus has been reported in the SWNPHD health district and several positive mosquito pools in Chase and Red Willow County for West Nile Virus throughout the summer.

Tami Herskowitz, Surveillance Nurse at SWNPHD wants residents to be prepared. “I am highly encouraging residents to prevent getting mosquito bites with personal protection and making adjustments to their surroundings.” Herskowitz 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

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 Herskowitz.

“Prevention is the best way to avoid WNV and DEET in your repellent is the most effective,” states Herskowitz. We have free DEET wipes at our office located in McCook at 404 West 10th Street, one block north of Arby’s, however it is a limited supply.”

Mosquitos are thriving in southwest Nebraska and the continued moisture is providing numerous ideal breeding situations. Mosquitoes breed in standing water. Even a small bucket that has stagnant water in it can become home for up to 1,000 mosquitoes. Here are some easy tips to eliminate standing water from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services:

- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water holding containers that have accumulated on your property. Do not overlook containers that have become overgrown by aquatic vegetation.
- Pay special attention to discarded tires that may have accumulated on your property.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers that are left out of doors. Drainage holes that are located on the container sides collect enough water for mosquitoes to breed in.
- Clean clogged roof gutters regularly (spring and fall), particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. **Roof gutters are easily overlooked but can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.**
- Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use. A wading pool becomes a mosquito producer if it is not used on a regular basis.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and do not allow water to stagnate in birdbaths. Both provide breeding habitat for domestic mosquitoes.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens are fashionable but become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended by a family that goes on vacation for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware that mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on swimming pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes will develop in any puddle that lasts for more than four days.

More information on West Nile Virus may be found at our website www.swhealth.ne.gov or call the McCook office at 308-345-4223. You can also follow us on Facebook & Twitter. SWNPHD serves the counties of Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins & Red Willow.

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