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For Immediate Release

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

McCook - A pool of mosquitoes in Red Willow County have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) according to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services confirmed that no human cases have been reported in the SWNPHD area. This follows two reported positive human cases in Nebraska.

“People get the West Nile Virus from an infected female mosquito bite and our concern is the virus has no vaccine,” states Tami Herskowitz, Surveillance Nurse at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “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 mosquitoes.” 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

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

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

When using repellent with DEET the Center for Disease Control has these recommendations:

- 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

- Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing – avoid overuse of product
- DEET may be used on adults, children and infants older than two months of age
- Protect infants by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge to fit

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

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. You can also follow us on Facebook & Twitter.

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