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For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager 308-345-4223

Disease from Insect Bites

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has received reports of two more cases of disease from insect bites - a third case of West Nile Virus (WNV) from a mosquito bite and one case of tularemia from a tick bite. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Nebraska has seen more tularemia cases than usual this fall.

“We are still seeing insect-related diseases in the health district,” explains Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “It is a good idea to continue using bug spray until the first hard freeze, and use permethrin on tents and camping gear to prevent tick bites.”

SWNPHD worked with Nebraska Department of Health and Humans Services (DHHS) doing tick drags over the summer to help identify which ticks are living in the health district. Tick dragging is a method for collecting ticks in areas that are likely to have ticks, such as woods, tall grasses, or weeds. The most common type of tick in southwest Nebraska is the American Dog Tick. These ticks are known to carry Tularemia and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Tularemia is caused by a bacteria that gets into the body when someone is bitten by an infected tick. It can also be spread by contact with infected animals like rabbits or rodents. The symptoms are fever, headache, swollen glands in the armpit or groin, and skin ulcers at the site of the bite. Tularemia can be life-threatening, but most infections are treated successfully with antibiotics. Contact your healthcare provider right away if you develop symptoms after being bitten by a tick.

More information on tularemia may be found at cdc.gov/tularemia or call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Information can also be found on SWNPHD’s Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

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