

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 31, 2023

**Mosquitoes Test Positive for West Nile Virus in Milwaukee County**  
***North Shore Health Department urges everyone to protect themselves against mosquito bites***

Milwaukee County – The North Shore Health Department reminds residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites and potential disease. Mosquitoes collected from two sites in Milwaukee County on July 25, in Jackson Park and in Glendale near Bender Rd., have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). These are the first mosquitoes that have tested positive for WNV in Milwaukee County since mosquito surveillance began in early July. No confirmed human cases of WNV have been reported in 2023. WNV is spread to humans and other animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire WNV by feeding on infected birds. The virus is not spread directly from person to person, animal to animal, or animal to person.

Becky Rowland, Health Officer of the North Shore Health Department provided the following statement: “Though there are no confirmed human cases of West Nile virus yet this year, the positive mosquitoes mean that residents of Milwaukee County should be more vigilant in efforts to prevent bites. The best prevention is not getting bit! Wear insect repellent, long sleeves and pants, and take steps to control mosquitos, like using screens in your windows and emptying items that have standing water (like bird baths and planters).”

Most people (80%) who are infected with WNV do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache, rash, and fatigue. However, some people (less than 1%) who become infected with the virus get seriously ill with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, confusion, paralysis, and coma. Older adults and those with compromised immune systems are at greater risk of developing severe illness that can be fatal. It is important that people contact a healthcare provider if they suspect they have WNV illness.

Public health officials in Wisconsin have monitored the spread of WNV since 2001. An average of 17 cases of WNV are reported among Wisconsin residents each year. WNV infections in humans have been reported from June through October; however, most people with WNV report becoming ill in August and September.

The best way to avoid illnesses spread by mosquitoes is to reduce exposure to mosquitoes and eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Mosquito activity and the risk of WNV will continue through the rest of the summer until there is a hard frost (temperatures below 28 degrees Fahrenheit for at least four straight hours). DHS offers these tips to protect yourself and your family against mosquito bites:

**Avoid Mosquito Bites**

- Apply an insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 to exposed skin and clothing.
- Prior to heading outdoors, treat clothing with permethrin; do not apply permethrin directly to skin.

- Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning hours, when mosquitoes that spread WNV are most active.
- Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

### **Mosquito-Proof Your Home**

- Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around your home by removing stagnant water from items around your property.
  - Empty standing water that has collected in tin cans, plastic containers, flower pots, discarded tires, roof gutters, and downspouts.
  - Turn over wheelbarrows, kiddie pools, buckets, and small boats such as canoes and kayaks when not in use.
  - Change the water in bird baths and pet dishes at least every three days.
  - Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Make sure window and door screens are intact and tightly-fitted to prevent mosquitoes from getting into your home.
- Trim or mow tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.

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