



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Woodford County  
Health Department**

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To: Area Media  
From: Erin Luckey

For Immediate Release

**West Nile Virus positive bird in Woodford County**

Woodford County Health Department (WCHD) has received confirmation that a deceased blackbird found in the Metamora area tested positive for West Nile Virus. This is the first bird that has tested positive for West Nile Virus in Woodford County in 2024. WCHD does surveillance to monitor birds and mosquitos that can potentially carry the virus. West Nile Virus can be transmitted to humans through mosquitos that have fed on a bird that has the virus. Residents can assist with West Nile Virus surveillance by reporting dead birds to WCHD during normal business hours. Please check the Woodford County Health Department's website for guidelines for submitting a bird for testing before calling to report a dead bird. West Nile Virus testing is conducted from May 1, 2024 through October 15, 2024. Woodford County Health Department can accept 10 birds per year.

West Nile Virus is transmitted through the bite of a female *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, which has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, many people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus. There are no vaccines to prevent or medications to treat West Nile Virus in people.

WCHD recommends using insect repellent to avoid mosquito bites and to reduce the risk of acquiring any mosquito-borne diseases. Insect repellent that is most effective contains EPA-registered active ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR 3535.

Horse owners should also take precautions to minimize exposure of their animals to mosquitoes. A vaccine to protect horses from West Nile Virus is available. While susceptible to the virus, horses are not known to transmit the disease to other horses or humans. For more information regarding West Nile Virus and horses, horse owners can contact their veterinarian.

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Taking some simple precautions can help residents avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – reduce, repel, and report.

**REDUCE** - make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows without proper screens shut.

- Eliminate, or refresh each week all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires, and any other containers.

**REPEL** - when outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Always follow instructions when using insect repellent. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.

**REPORT** – report locations where you see water sitting stagnant for more than a week such as roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

For more information regarding West Nile Virus, visit [www.health.woodfordcountyl.gov](http://www.health.woodfordcountyl.gov), or Illinois Department of Public Health, [www.dph.illinois.gov](http://www.dph.illinois.gov)

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