

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Panhandle mosquitos tests positive for West Nile Virus

Several mosquito pools from the Panhandle have recently tested positive for West Nile Virus. These positive pools give local health departments indicators of the location of the virus and the potential for it to be spread through human contact. Several counties in the Panhandle have been routinely testing sites to trap and monitor mosquitos over the summer months.

To help reduce the risk of West Nile Virus spread, Melissa Cervantes, Environmental Health Coordinator for Panhandle Public Health, urges residents to follow these precautions to protect themselves and their families:

- Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks.
- Take extra precautions when going outdoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Drain standing water.
- Add larvicides to animal drinking troughs.
- Keep window screens in good repair.

West Nile Virus is contracted through mosquitos that have bitten an infected bird. Generally birds cannot pass the virus on it is only through the bite of a mosquito that humans can become infected. West Nile includes flu-like symptoms that can include a slight fever and headaches. Severe symptoms of West Nile can lead to encephalitis which can cause inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis. People over 50, infants, and pregnant women are especially susceptible to this disease.

The positive mosquito pools indicate that the local health departments are no longer accepting dead birds for testing. If you suspect you have a bird that has died of unknown origins related to West Nile, dispose of it by sealing it in a Ziploc bag and throwing it away. Do not touch a bird with your bare hands, use gloves or an inverted bag to handle and dispose of. If you have any questions regarding birds or West Nile Virus, please call Melissa Cervantes at 308-487-3600 extension 108 or e-mail at mcervantes@pphd.org.

For additional information on West Nile Virus visit www.pphd.org or call PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.