

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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St. Louis Encephalitis Virus found in Mosquito Pool

A mosquito pool in Sheridan County has recently tested positive for St. Louis encephalitis, the first positive pool detected in the state this season.

While this virus is endemic to Nebraska, outbreaks are rare and occur only periodically. St. Louis is similar to West Nile in symptoms and transmission. The virus is found in birds which can then be contracted by mosquitos and passed on to humans. Symptoms include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and tiredness. Most people will not display symptoms, such as with West Nile. Severe symptoms such as encephalitis, or swelling of the brain, are rare and are most likely to occur in older adults.

There is no specific treatment for St. Louis encephalitis. Individuals who feel they might have symptoms of either St. Louis or West Nile should seek medical help immediately. Reducing your risk of contracting either virus can be done with proper prevention techniques.

Follow these simple precautions to protect yourself and your family:

- 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.
- Get rid of standing water.
- Add larvicides to animal drinking troughs.
- Keep window screens in good repair.

Panhandle Public Health is also teaming up with area schools to help fall sports fans and students stay protected against mosquitos by offering DEET wipes to be distributed at games or meets. Most mosquitos will not die off until the first freeze, so students are still susceptible to bites at chilly football games, cross country meets, or even on the playground for recess.

Please contact Melissa Cervantes, Environmental Health Coordinator with Panhandle Public Health District, with any concerns or questions involving St. Louis encephalitis or West Nile virus at 308-487-3600 ext. 108 or mcervantes@pphd.org.

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.