

NEWS RELEASE

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Rain brings standing water and mosquitoes

With the ongoing wet weather and flooding in the Panhandle, there is more standing water on the ground and in outdoor containers, providing the optimal breeding ground for hungry mosquitoes. Public health experts caution this is also an optimal time for mosquitoes to share the West Nile Virus with their victims.

West Nile is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Standing water should be drained whenever possible or treated with bacillus thuringensis (BTI) briquettes. Use the briquettes in places where mosquitoes breed such as ponds, bird baths, unused swimming pools, flower pots, rain barrels, old tires, and any other place where water collects.

"It is very important that people are taking the necessary precautions to prevent mosquito bites," said Kim Engel, director of Panhandle Public Health District. "It only takes one mosquito bite for you to become infected with West Nile Virus."

To avoid mosquito bites, Engel recommends:

- Applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus;
- Wearing long-sleeved shirt, pants and socks;
- Avoiding going out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active; and
- Eliminating standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites.

Most people who are infected by a mosquito show no symptoms or only mild, flu-like symptoms. Less than one out of 150 people who get bitten by an infected mosquito and become infected will get seriously ill. However, people over 50 and those with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to the disease and are more likely to experience serious consequences.

West Nile fever includes flu-like symptoms such as fever and muscle weakness. Other symptoms may involve nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and/or a skin rash on the chest, stomach or back. Symptoms of the more serious West Nile encephalitis include inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis.

For further information on West Nile Virus or to download an informational podcast on the topic, please visit www.pphd.org.