

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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The Panhandle has reported the first positive test for West Nile Virus in a bird in the State of Nebraska. The WNV-positive bird was found in August in Box Butte County.

As area high school sports fans head out to cheer on their teams this fall, they need to be prepared to battle hungry mosquitoes who may be carrying the dangerous West Nile Virus. While clinically diagnosed rates of WNV are down across the state, this is the worst time to let your guard down, Tabi Prochazka said.

Prochazka is the environmental health coordinator for Panhandle Public Health. “Cooler weather is not time to drop your defense against mosquitoes,” she said. “In fact, football season is prime season for the Culex mosquito. Culex mosquitoes are the carrier of West Nile Virus from birds to humans.”

Prochazka said until the first freeze, Panhandle residents must be on guard against mosquitoes that may carry the West Nile Virus.

There have been two human cases of WNV in the Panhandle, in Scotts Bluff and Cheyenne counties. Of nearly 75,000 mosquitoes collected, fifteen pools were positive in Sheridan County, seven in Garden County and one in Dawes County. In the most recent mosquito trap collections, five of six traps showed positive mosquitoes for WNV.

People can reduce their risk by:

- applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535;
- 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.

West Nile fever includes flu-like symptoms such as fever and muscle weakness. Symptoms of West Nile encephalitis include inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis. People over 50 and those with weak immune systems are especially vulnerable to the disease.

For additional information about West Nile Virus, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org). The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.