

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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## **Panhandle mosquito tests positive for West Nile Virus Residents urged to use caution outdoors**

A mosquito pool from Sheridan County has recently tested positive for West Nile Virus. "Finding the virus in mosquito's gives public health officials an indication of the level of virus in the area and the risk to human beings of contracting the disease," said Tabi Prochazka, Environmental Health Coordinator for Panhandle Public Health District.

Prochazka encourages everyone to follow these simple 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.
- Get rid of standing water.
- Add larvicides to animal drinking troughs.
- Keep window screens in good repair.

West Nile is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird," said Prochazka. In turn, the mosquito can pass the virus to humans. Routine mosquito trapping sites are located in four Panhandle counties.

PPHD is in full swing for the 2012 West Nile Virus season through the collection of dead birds and mosquitoes. Citizens may call 308-487-3600 ext 107 or toll free at 866-701-7173 ext 107 to report a dead bird. Testing will be conducted on birds that have died within 24 hours, with no evidence of maggots or rotting. Testing on all species of birds will be conducted this year.

West Nile 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 physical activity and nutrition, 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.