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Bird from Southwestern Public Health Region Tests Positive for West Nile Virus

Protect yourself from infected mosquitoes by using bug spray with DEET and cleaning up breeding sites

Public Health Ontario has reported that the first bird to test positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in Ontario this year was found in the region served by Southwestern Public Health.

Birds testing positive for WNV are an indicator of the presence of WNV in the environment as birds can get the virus from the bite of an infected mosquito.

“The identification of a bird positive for West Nile Virus serves as our annual reminder to protect ourselves from mosquitoes,” says Amy Pavletic, Manager of Environmental Health.

Pavletic’s top tips for protecting yourself from the bite of an infected mosquito are using bug spray that has DEET when outdoors, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, avoid being active outside at dawn and dusk, and cleaning up mosquito breeding sites by removing standing water at least once a week.

Neither Southwestern Public Health nor Public Health Ontario (PHO) directly collect dead birds for WNV testing. The Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative collects dead birds and performs the testing before providing the results to PHO. SWPH will begin its mosquito surveillance program for WNV next week, which will last throughout the summer.

Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not show any symptoms. Others may have headache, body ache, fever, nausea, vomiting and rash. Fewer than 1% of people who are infected develop serious or life-threatening symptoms such as meningitis or encephalitis.

How to prevent mosquito bites:

- Use bug spray with DEET when outdoors. Always read and follow the label.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts or jackets and long pants. Wear light colours wherever possible.
- Every week, remove or drain standing water from bird baths, flower pots, barrels, cans, pool covers, clogged drains, etc.
- Keep bushes and shrubs clear of overgrowth
- Properly maintain fish ponds to prevent or control mosquitoes

Contact

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