



Vilas County Public Health Department

Physical Address: 302 West Pine Street

Mailing Address: 330 Court Street • Eagle River, WI 54521

715-479-3656 • 866-845-2726 • Fax: 715-479-3741

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Contact: Gina Egan, Vilas County Health Department: giegan@co.vilas.wi.us

Crow Tests Positive for West Nile Virus in Vilas County

Vilas County Public Health Department reports a dead crow that was found in Vilas County on August 11, 2018, has tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first bird that tested positive for West Nile virus in Vilas County this year.

“The positive bird means that residents of Vilas County need to continue to be careful in their efforts to prevent mosquito bites,” Gina Egan, Health Officer said.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected birds.

“Vilas County residents should be aware of West Nile virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Egan said. “The virus seems to be here to stay. The best way to avoid the disease is to limit exposure to and get rid of breeding grounds for mosquitoes.”

The Vilas County Public Health Department recommends the following:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use insect repellent on clothing as well as exposed skin since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry.
- Properly throw away items that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

The majority of people (80%) who are infected with West Nile virus do not get sick. Those who do become ill usually experience mild symptoms such as:

- fever,
- headache and muscle aches,
- rash, and

- fatigue (being tired).

Less than 1% of people infected with the virus get seriously ill with symptoms that include:

- high fever,
- muscle weakness,
- stiff neck,
- disorientation,
- mental confusion,
- tremors,
- confusion,
- paralysis, and
- coma.

Older adults and those with weak immune systems have a greater chance to develop a central nervous system illness that can lead to death.

The Department of Health Services has monitored the spread of West Nile virus since 2001 among wild birds, horses, mosquitoes, and people. West Nile virus infections in people have been reported from June through October; however, most reported becoming ill with West Nile virus in August and September.

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health will continue surveillance for West Nile virus until the end of the mosquito season. To report a sick or dead crow, blue jay, or raven, please call the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

For more information on West Nile virus:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/ArboviralDiseases/WestNileVirus/Index.htm>

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