

News release

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State's first mosquitoes with West Nile virus detected in Malheur County

West Nile virus, a mild flu-like disease spread by mosquitoes, has been reported to have been found in several testing sites in Jordan Valley in Malheur County in southeastern Oregon, according to Oregon Public Health officials.

Health officials are advising people in Malheur County to take precautions against mosquitoes in order to avoid the risk of infection.

“With the upcoming Labor Day holiday people may be camping and getting outside more. We want people in that area to be especially careful to avoid getting mosquito bites. The risk of contracting West Nile virus may be low, but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” said Emilio DeBess, D.V.M., M.P.V.M., Oregon Public Health veterinarian.

Current cases of West Nile virus appear to be concentrated in mosquitoes in the Jordan Valley area.

Because of the number of mosquito pools testing positive in any area could lead to infection, health officials recommend people and animals be protected against mosquito bites.

Eighty percent of people infected with West Nile virus exhibit no symptoms. Of the remaining 20 percent, most have very mild symptoms, such as fever, headaches and nausea lasting from three to six days. In a few cases, more severe symptoms

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occur including convulsions or disorientation. The central nervous system also may be affected, resulting in a headache associated with fever, aseptic meningitis or encephalitis.

DeBess says simple precautions can prevent the spread of West Nile virus:

- Eliminate sources of standing water that are a breeding ground for mosquitoes, including watering troughs, bird baths, clogged gutters and old tires;
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active;
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants in mosquito-infested areas;
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus or Picardin and follow the directions on the container;
- Make sure screen doors and windows are in good repair and fit tightly.

Additional information about West Nile virus is available at:

public.health.oregon.gov/diseasesconditions/diseasesaz/Pages/disease.aspx?did=8

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About the Oregon Health Authority

The Oregon Health Authority is the organization at the forefront of lowering and containing costs, improving quality, and increasing access to health care in order to improve the lifelong health of Oregonians. The OHA is overseen by the nine-member citizen Oregon Health Policy Board working toward comprehensive health and health care reform in our state.