

## News release

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### **Oregon's first West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes of 2013 found in Malheur County**

*Health officials say people can reduce risk by covering up, using repellent*

The discovery of the first mosquitoes to test positive for West Nile virus in 2013 is a good reminder for Oregonians about the importance of protecting themselves this summer, public health officials say.

West Nile virus, which usually presents as a flu-like disease, is transmitted by mosquito bites. The disease has been found in Malheur County, according to officials at the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division. The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Oregon State University's College of Veterinary Medicine found the virus late Friday in two mosquito pools – a sample of about 50 mosquitoes – from the Harper/Little Valley area of the county. A total of five pools in Malheur County were tested.

Although no human cases of the disease have been reported in Oregon so far in 2013, 12 human cases were identified in 2012.

Malheur County Health director Stephanie Dockweiler, R.N., B.S.N., said that there is a potential risk of infection, and mosquitoes have been making their presence known thanks to a mild winter and high springtime temperatures.

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“People can avoid getting mosquito bites by taking appropriate precautions to protect themselves,” Dockweiler said. “Mosquito bites might seem inevitable as people head outdoors, but they don’t have to be.”

Emilio DeBess, D.V.M., M.P.H., Oregon Public Health Division veterinarian, says simple precautions can prevent the spread of West Nile virus:

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

DeBess recommends protecting animals against mosquito bites. Pet owners should contact their veterinarian about topical mosquito repellants. Horse owners should consult their veterinarian about vaccinating their horses for West Nile virus.

In 2012, there were 12 human cases of West Nile virus in Oregon in five counties: Malheur, Coos, Lane, Deschutes and Multnomah. The virus was found in two birds, 71 mosquito pools and two horses. In 2011, only three mosquito pools and two horses tested positive for West Nile. The virus also can be found in chickens, squirrels and dogs.

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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 occur, including convulsions or disorientation. The central nervous system also may be affected, resulting in a headache associated with fever, aseptic meningitis or encephalitis. Consult your health care provider if you have these symptoms. Health care providers can contact the Malheur County Health Department for information on West Nile virus testing services offered by the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory.

Additional information about West Nile virus is available on the Oregon [Public Health Division website](#) or from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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