



Media Release

For Immediate Release

State of Oregon Department of Human Services

Washington County Department of Health and Human Services

Date: 9/13/2007

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West Nile Virus Detected in Washington County Crow

Public Health Officials Recommend Prevention Measures for Residents

Hillsboro, Ore. –Washington County health officials received confirmation from Oregon State University's Veterinarian Diagnostic Laboratory in Corvallis that a crow found in Hillsboro has

tested positive for West Nile virus. The bird was collected near the intersection of E. Main St. and NE. Brookwood Parkway in Hillsboro on September 5. Lab results were returned yesterday.

“This is the first bird testing positive for West Nile virus in Washington County this year and the second since 2006,” says Toby Harris, Public Health Program Supervisor for Washington County’s Department of Health and Human Services. “We’re fortunate that the virus hasn’t been seen more frequently,” she adds. “The department will survey an area covering a 5 mile radius of the discovery site to check for mosquito larvae and will apply environmentally friendly larvicide as necessary.

“State-wide in 2007, we’ve seen 13 cases in people, mostly in Malheur and Union counties,” says State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Emilio DeBess. He reports, “Multnomah county has had 11 cases in birds this year and Clackamas county has had three, but no human cases have occurred in the Tri-County area.”

The risk of serious West Nile virus infection and illness is low. Humans can only get the virus from mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. “Most people infected with West Nile virus will have no symptoms or a mild, flu-like illness,” states Harris. “Fewer than one percent of infected individuals will develop brain or nervous system illness, such as meningitis or encephalitis. The infection is potentially more serious for people over the age of 50, and in people with suppressed immune systems. We encourage people to take precautions to protect themselves and their families from infection,” adds Harris. Although anyone can contract the virus, the leading risk factor is age. People 50 years old or older are most susceptible to developing serious symptoms, according to Harris.

Residents should take these actions to prevent contracting the virus:

Use mosquito repellent, preferably one containing DEET, Picardin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Always follow the directions on the label carefully. When applying repellent to children, first rub it on your hands then on each child.

Eliminate all sources of standing water, including clogged gutters, birdbaths and old tires. Avoid playing and working outdoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.

Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors.

Fit screen doors and windows tightly to avoid flying mosquitoes from entering homes.

Discuss the risk of West Nile infection with your veterinarian and consider vaccinating any horses you may own.

Harris noted that as temperatures begin to cool, mosquitoes are less active, but says that people should continue to use caution.

“Some bird species such as crows, ravens, and jays are especially susceptible to West Nile virus,” says Harris. “Although there is no evidence that a person can get West Nile virus from picking up a dead bird, we recommend avoiding handling dead birds with bare hands.”

Harris encourages the public to report intact and recently deceased birds found dead by calling the Washington County Environmental Health Office at (503) 846-8722.

Currently, Washington County residents benefit from a multi-disciplinary team effort to monitor for the presence of the disease in birds and mosquitoes and to reduce mosquito breeding areas. Cooperative efforts are being taken by the county, cities and special districts, such as Clean Water Services and the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District. These jurisdictions are working together to monitor and treat mosquito breeding areas with environmentally friendly larvicide and to provide the public with educational materials and information.

Additional information is available from the Washington County West Nile Prevention Information Line at (503) 846-8890 or the Washington County Web site at www.co.washington.or.us/mosquito. Washington County Health Department’s brochure, *West Nile Virus and Mosquitoes in Washington County*, is available at your public library.

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