

## **West Nile Virus**

### ***Fight the Bite!***

**Recorded Information Line - 09/15/06**

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West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne infection that can cause illness in humans. The virus mainly affects birds but can be transmitted to animals and humans when bitten by a mosquito that is infected with the virus. In Broome County and across the United States, residents are encouraged to take steps to reduce mosquito-breeding habitats on their property. Most WNV infected humans have no symptoms, a small portion develop flu like symptoms such as headache, fever, body ache, rash and swollen lymph glands. Less than 1% of infected people develop severe illness that causes encephalitis. Individuals aged 50 and above are at highest risk for serious illness.

Because mosquitoes spread West Nile Virus, protecting yourself against mosquito bites is the best way to avoid the transmission of the disease. "Mosquito bites can transmit disease." There are about 70 mosquito species in New York State, and a handful of them can transmit West Nile Virus."

The type of mosquitoes known to transmit West Nile Virus prefer to live in and around artificial containers (pots, buckets, rain barrels, abandoned swimming pools and tire piles.) Make sure your home is protected from mosquitoes by keeping window and door screens in good repair. Reduce the mosquito population around your home and property by emptying or filling in swimming pools that are no longer used, maintaining swimming pools that are in use by filtering and chemically treating the water, and keeping rain gutters free of leaves. Remove scrap tires from your property, as they are a prime-breeding source for mosquitoes. Tires can accumulate small pools of water where adult mosquitoes will lay their eggs. Over the course of one breeding season, thousands of mosquitoes can be generated from just one tire. Many municipalities sponsor programs to dispose of tires. County residents should watch the news media for tire collection events taking place in their municipality. Residents should report tire piles or abandoned swimming pools to the Health Department at 778-2887 during regular business hours.

In addition to reducing mosquito-breeding habitats around your home, residents can reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes with the following tips:

- Minimize outdoor activities between dusk and dawn.
- Wear shoes and socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when you are outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active.

- Consider using mosquito repellent containing DEET when it is necessary to be outdoors. Make sure to follow the directions on the label.
- Dead Crow sightings provide the earliest indication of WNV in an area. Broome County residents can report ill or dead crows by contacting Dr. Clark at Binghamton University by telephone at 777-6228 or email at [crowsch@binghamton.edu](mailto:crowsch@binghamton.edu)
- Live or dead birds that are found pose no immediate health threat to the public. These calls do not require an emergency response. To remove a dead bird, cover the bird with a bucket or box. Use gloves or a shovel to place the bird in the garbage.