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First West Nile Virus Case Confirmed in Comanche County

The first case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Comanche County this season has now been confirmed by the Comanche County Health Department. Health officials encourage residents to take precautions to reduce the risk of contracting WNV, a mosquito-borne illness.

“We want to remind everyone to use insect repellent when outdoors and mosquito-proof their home and yard,” said Comanche County Health Department Regional Director Brandie O’Connor.

During 2014, 18 cases of WNV were confirmed among Oklahoma residents; none of them resulted in deaths. So far, there have been 53 cases in 2015. Four of those cases have resulted in death.

“Anyone can be bitten by a mosquito and acquire WNV,” said O’Connor. “Persons older than 50 years of age, and those with certain chronic medical conditions including diabetes and hypertension are at greatest risk of developing severe WNV disease that impairs the central nervous system. Although we cannot predict the severity of this year’s WNV season, it is important for everyone to know the highest risk months in Oklahoma for WNV exposure occur from July through October.”

Among the precautions to take against mosquito bites are the following:

- Use an insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin and clothing when you go outdoors, particularly if you are outside between dusk and dawn when WNV-infected mosquitoes are more likely to bite. Insect repellent with permethrin should be used on clothing only.
- Repair or install window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Prevent items such as buckets, cans, pool covers, flower pots, and tires from holding standing water so mosquitoes don’t have a place to breed.
- Empty your pet’s outdoor water bowl and refill daily.
- Clean leaves and debris from rain gutters regularly to ensure they are not clogged.

WNV is spread through the bite of the *Culex* mosquito, which feeds on infected birds and then transmits the virus when biting humans, horses, and some other mammals.

Symptoms of WNV include sudden onset of fever, headache, dizziness, and muscle weakness. Long-lasting complications can include difficulty concentrating, migraine headaches, extreme muscle weakness and tremors, and paralysis of a limb. If one or more of these symptoms develop, especially after suffering mosquito bites within the previous two weeks, a health care provider should be contacted. Persons over the age of 50 are at greatest risk of developing severe neurologic disease from WNV. Some of the neurological effects of WNV may be permanent or fatal.

For more information, contact the Comanche County Health Department at (580) 248-5890, or visit the Oklahoma State Department of Health’s WNV website at <http://go.usa.gov/wpz>.

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