

FOR RELEASE: June 23, 2008

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MOSQUITOES COLLECTED IN JACKSON COUNTY TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

Murphysboro, Ill. – According to Miriam Link-Mullison, Public Health Administrator for Jackson County Health Department, “Routine mosquito testing has identified our first West Nile virus positive batch of mosquitoes for 2008. People need to ensure they are protected from mosquito bites.”

Because West Nile virus activity in *Culex* mosquitoes increases during hot weather, personal protection against mosquitoes is particularly important during this time of the year. Individuals can reduce their risk of West Nile illness and other mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- **DUSK TO DAWN:** Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn.
- **DRESS APPROPRIATELY:** When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt.
- **DEET:** Apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- **DOORS AND OPENINGS:** Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- **DRAIN:** Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Only about two persons out of 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Illness from West Nile disease normally occurs three to fourteen days after the bite of an infected mosquito and is usually mild and includes fever, headache and body aches. However, serious illness such as encephalitis and meningitis, with lingering complications and even death, are possible. Persons older than 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

Jackson County Health Department has been conducting a West Nile virus surveillance program since May that includes trapping adult mosquitoes and then testing them for the West Nile virus. Although steps have been taken to identify potential mosquito breeding sites, and to either eliminate these sites or treat them with mosquito larvicides, it is important that everybody do their part now to protect themselves and their family from mosquito bites during this time.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm or people can call the West Nile Virus Hotline at 866-369-9710 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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