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Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Mosquitoes make a late summer comeback – precautions recommended to prevent the spread of West Nile Virus

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency announced that due to the high rainfall in the latter part of August, mosquitoes have made a significant comeback. With mosquitoes comes the risk of West Nile virus. With the relatively low mosquito activity this summer, many of us have become complacent about protecting ourselves and our families from these summer pests. With September comes football and other school sports, and lots of other fun OUTDOOR activities, putting us at risk for exposure to mosquitoes and WNV. There was already a human case of WNV in Oakland County in early August, and with the increase in mosquito activity, we can be sure there will be a lot more people bitten and the potential for infection will increase.

Remember, the virus is transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitoes. It is not generally spread from person to person contact. Therefore there are simple **ways to minimize risk.**

- Apply insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET to exposed skin or clothing as directed by the manufacturer's directions (follow label recommendation for children under 2)
- Maintain window screens to keep mosquitoes out of buildings.
- Drain standing water in the yard. Empty mosquito breeding sites such as buckets, barrels, cans, clogged rain gutters or discarded tires.
- Avoid activities in areas where there are a large number of mosquitoes present.
- Avoid being outside at dawn and dusk – mosquito activity is highest at these times.

Horse owners are encouraged to contact their local veterinarian to discuss appropriate preventive measures. **Tips for horses include:**

- Using approved insect repellents to protect horses
- Placing horses in stables or barns during prime exposure hours of dawn and dusk.
- Eliminate standing ground water at least twice per week
- Consult with your local veterinarian about the use of available approved vaccine.

Other facts to consider:

- Most persons infected with the virus have no symptoms.
- 1 in 4 infected persons will have mild illness with fever, headache and body aches, rash and swollen lymph glands.
- Encephalitis is far less common. Symptoms include: headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness and paralysis.
- Death is extremely rare.
- The virus is NOT transmitted from person to person, horse to horse, or horse to person.

For additional information please visit our website at www.bhsj.org or the State of Michigan at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases