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First human case of West Nile virus for 2016 confirmed in Michigan

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) today confirmed the state’s first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) for 2016. The resident is an older adult from Livingston County and is currently recovering.

“Hot, dry summers are ideal for the mosquito that transmits West Nile virus, and this case is an important reminder to stay vigilant against mosquito bites throughout the summer,” said Dr. Eden Wells, Chief Medical Executive at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. “All residents older than six months of age should use repellent and take extra care during peak mosquito-biting hours between dusk and dawn.”

To date, 13 birds have tested positive for WNV so far this season, and 3 WNV positive mosquito pools have been detected in Oakland and Saginaw counties. Infected birds and mosquitoes can provide an early warning of WNV activity in a community. For the most current information on mosquito-borne virus activity in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus.

Residents can stay healthy by using simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their families by reading and following all repellent label directions. The following steps are recommended to avoid WNV:

- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.
- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other EPA approved product to exposed skin or clothing, and always following the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Wear light colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.

Most people who become infected with West Nile virus will not develop any symptoms of illness. However, some become sick three to 15 days after exposure. About one-in-five infected persons will have mild illness with fever, and about one in 150 infected people will become severely ill.

Mild illness may include headache, body aches, joint pain, vomiting diarrhea, or rash. Severe symptoms of WNV are associated with encephalitis or meningitis, and may include: include stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness, convulsions and paralysis. People 50 and older are more susceptible to severe WNV disease symptoms.

For more information and surveillance activity about WNV, visit www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus.

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