



Utah Dept's of Health, Agriculture, and Natural Resources; 12 local health depts., Utah Association of Mosquito Abatement and local districts.

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Additional agency contacts, Page 3

West Nile Virus Found in Utah

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah public health officials report that West Nile virus (WNV) has been found in Utah. Blood taken from two chickens near Price, Utah, shows the presence of WNV. In addition, just this morning, tests show two horses from Uintah and Emery counties are positive for WNV. Also today, preliminary-positive results are in two pools of mosquitoes from Utah County and Uintah counties. This means that WNV has been identified in Utah. No human cases have been acquired in Utah.

The preliminary test results of sentinel chicken blood, taken late last week, showed the presence of WNV. These tests were processed at the Utah State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Further testing at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, today confirmed that the chickens had been infected with WNV. Chickens are infected through bites from infected mosquitoes. Chickens are used as “sentinels” to detect when the virus is present in mosquitoes as a warning for humans, horses and other animals. Testing of sentinel chickens, dead birds and mosquitoes will continue statewide. However, tracking and monitoring resources may be shifted to look for the virus in other areas of the state. To date, 14 people, 9 horses, 262 chickens (performed weekly) 98 dead birds and thousands of mosquitoes have been tested for WNV in Utah and only two chickens and two horses have tested positive. It is very important to continue vaccinating horses with the WNV vaccine. Mosquito abatement efforts will continue statewide and will be increased in areas where WNV has been found.

The Utah Department of Health has been working with other state and local agencies involved in these efforts including the Utah Mosquito Abatement Association and the local

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Page 2 of 3 – West Nile Virus Found In Utah

mosquito abatement districts, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, the Utah Department of Natural Resources, and Utah's 12 local health departments.

Since people can become infected with WNV through mosquito bites, individuals should protect themselves. Public education has been a priority throughout the state with the "Fight the Bite" Campaign that includes public service announcements, posters, handouts, web resources and will soon include billboards and other educational material. The campaign urges Utahns to reduce their risk through these simple steps:

- Protect from dusk to dawn. That is when mosquitoes that carry the virus are most active, so take precautions to prevent mosquito bites.
- Use repellent with DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), following the label instructions carefully. For adults, use repellents containing DEET at 30-35% concentration. For children 2-12, use repellents containing 10% or less DEET. Do not use on children under the age of 2.
- Take cover. Wear light-colored, long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies any time.
- Make sure screen doors and window screens are in good condition. Small holes are large enough to allow mosquitoes to enter.

Around your home and property, eliminate places for mosquitoes to reproduce:

- Eliminate standing water sources around housing areas, such as water in old tires, cans, poorly kept swimming pools, toys, wheelbarrows, etc.
- Water that is kept outside for a reason, such as pet water dishes, birdbaths, etc., needs to be changed at least once every 2-3 days.
- Clean rain gutters at least once a year.
- Aerate ornamental ponds or contact your local mosquito abatement district about pond treatment.
- Maintain swimming pools properly or drain them.

WNV can be a very serious disease, which can result in death. Even in areas affected by WNV, most mosquitoes do not carry the virus, therefore the risk of being infected from a single mosquito bite is very low. Infected mosquitoes do not look or behave differently from

Page 3 of 3 – West Nile Virus Found In Utah

mosquitoes that are not infected. If a person is bitten by an infected mosquito and becomes infected, four out of five people will not develop any symptoms of the disease, and only about 1 in 150 will become seriously ill. However, it's still important to prevent mosquito bites since WNV can cause a serious illness, especially in persons over 50 years of age or with weak immune systems. People with serious West Nile disease have a high fever, fatigue, and headache and may become confused, have seizures, go into a coma, or rarely, die. There is no specific treatment or human vaccine for WNV.

WNV was first found in the United States in 1999 in New York City and has spread across the U.S. since then. The virus is spread from bird-to-bird by mosquitoes. Many birds can become infected with the virus and not become sick, while other birds, especially crows, ravens, magpies and jays, often die when infected with the virus. Individuals can also help by watching for and reporting dead crows, raptors, ravens, magpies, or jays. (For public domain photos of these birds, visit www.wildlife.utah.gov). Reports of dead birds should be made to local Wildlife Resources office, local health departments, local mosquito abatement districts or the Utah Department of Health's Office of Epidemiology.

For more information, weekly testing updates and materials, visit: www.health.utah.gov.

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