



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Governmental Communications

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West Nile Virus Confirmed in St. Charles County Bird

First Confirmed-Positive Bird in Missouri for 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 3, 2004

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St. Charles County - The Saint Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment, Division of Public Health, received confirmation Wednesday from the State of Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services that a bird collected in the O'Fallon area of St. Charles County tested positive for the West Nile virus (WNV). This is the first time this year that the virus has been identified in the bird population in St. Charles County.

According to Gil Copley, the Director of the Department of Community Health and the Environment, finding an infected bird is not surprising and finding it in St. Charles County is coincidental. Infected birds were found in all metro-area counties last year. The significance of the finding is that it confirms that WNV is still present in birds as expected and that mosquitoes will be infected by feeding on those birds. "We all need to be cautious again this year in proper personal protection against mosquito bites in order to avoid the possibility of infection," Copley said.

Most individuals, even if bitten by an infected mosquito, won't become seriously ill or even experience any symptoms. However, people over age 50 and those with compromised immune systems are likely to be at higher risk of illness and death. Anyone with a weakened immune system (due to diabetes, AIDS, cancer, or other chronic health problems) should avoid exposure to possible sources of infection, including WNV. Anyone in these higher risk groups should be especially careful to reduce the risk of mosquito bites.

St. Charles County's mosquito control program is handled in a three-pronged approach:

1. *St. Charles County began larviciding to kill mosquitoes before they reach the adult stage. Mosquito trapping to help identify species began in April.*
2. *Early evening spraying to kill adult biting mosquitoes began in May.*
3. *An educational effort to enlist the help of citizens in eliminating mosquito breeding spots is an ongoing effort which is crucial to successful mosquito control.*

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Personal protection is an important part of preventing WNV in humans. Human cases of WNV can begin appearing as early as July. Using insect repellents containing DEET can reduce the risk of exposure to mosquitoes carrying the virus. DEET is the commercial name for the chemical N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, the active ingredient in many insect repellents. (Active ingredients are sometimes listed on the front of the can). As always, be a careful label reader. Look for concentrations of about 25% for adults, and less than 10% for children. Reapply if time spent outdoors is longer than the label indicates it is effective.

The county program provides mosquito control services in unincorporated St. Charles County and Lake St. Louis, Augusta, Wentzville, Cottleville, and Weldon Spring Heights under contract. The cities of St. Peters, O'Fallon and St. Charles also operate a mosquito control program and work in partnership with St. Charles County.

St. Charles County is actively involved in the West Nile Virus Work Group, a coalition of metro-area public health departments. The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment website is host to the Metropolitan West Nile Virus Information Center. Extensive information, including the metro area "West Nile Virus Response Plan" can be found at www.scchealth.org under the West Nile Virus Information Center link on the right. Information about mosquito repellants is also available and reports of dead hawks, blue jays and crows can be made online through the center.

For more information call the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment at 636-949-7404 or email health@mail.win.org.

**MOSQUITO CONTROL
CITIZENS CAN HELP BY DOING THE FOLLOWING**

- Dispose of all unused containers such as tin cans, bottles, buckets, vases and old tires.
- Clear rain gutters & downspouts of leaves or debris.
- Stack buckets, barrels, tubs, & other containers upside down.
- Cover boats & canoes or store them upside down.
- Stock rock garden pools & lily ponds with small fish such as the top water minnow (the mosquitofish).
- Empty birdbaths/wading pools weekly.
- Fill-in low places where water stands.
- Properly maintain larger backyard swimming pools.
- Cover rain barrels & cisterns with 16-mesh screening.
- Turn wheelbarrows & wagons over.