NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Governmental Communications

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West Nile Virus Cases Reported in County

First 2004 Case of Human Disease Reported to County Health Department
Another Probable Case Reported and Pending Lab Results

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St. Charles County – The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment announced today that preliminary reports indicate that a St. Charles County child has tested positive for the West Nile Virus disease. The resident is an 8-year-old male living in a section of unincorporated St. Charles County in the O'Fallon area. Ongoing case investigation indicates that the disease was possibly acquired in another state, Arizona, which has, as of July 15, reported 114 human cases in 2004; however, it is still possible that the disease was acquired in St. Charles County since the virus has been found locally in mosquitoes and birds. Notification came Thursday from the hospital treating the patient after it received positive laboratory confirmation of the disease. The patient has been released from the hospital. This is the first positive human case of West Nile Virus reported in St. Charles County and the state of Missouri in 2004. The first human case in Missouri comes approximately five weeks earlier than in previous years. In 2003, St. Charles County had two human cases of West Nile Virus, but no resulting deaths. In 2002, St Charles County had seven human cases and two deaths resulting from West Nile Virus.

A second probable case of West Nile Virus was reported early Friday in a 70-year old male who resides in St. Charles City. Laboratory confirmation is pending. In both cases, extensive outdoor recreational activity was reported.

According to Gil Copley, the Director of the Department of Community Health and the Environment, West Nile Virus disease has been present in Missouri and in St. Charles County for the past three years with human cases occurring each year. "The best way for residents to avoid the possibility of infection is to use adequate personal protection measures to avoid mosquito bites. Bites can occur at anytime, but are most likely at dawn and dusk. Residents should consider avoiding outdoor activities during those times.

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When spending time outdoors it is essential to use mosquito repellants containing DEET. Carefully following label instructions will provide excellent protection. Repellants are safe for adults and children if used according to directions. When a person is not protected by repellant, every hour outdoors is another hour of risk for acquiring the disease" Copley said.

Mosquito control and surveillance efforts continue in the county. The county and municipal programs regularly conduct daytime larviciding and nighttime spraying. The location of this case has no particular significance in terms of risk since West Nile Virus infected birds and mosquitoes have been identified throughout the St. Louis Metro area and the State of Missouri. "The message to our citizens is that you are at risk if you are bitten by a mosquito, no matter how low that risk may be. This is a preventable disease when you use proper personal protection," Copley said.

Although the risk of contacting the disease is low, it can have devastating health consequences in vulnerable individuals. The elderly have historically been at greatest risk as well as those with compromised immune systems. It is obvious, however, that everyone is at some level of risk, even children. The Department of Community Health and the Environment stresses prevention and urges residents to take these steps to reduce the risk of exposure.

- Always use mosquito repellents containing DEET (follow product instructions carefully, especially with children).
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks when outdoors in areas with a lot of mosquito activity.
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can breed.
- Remove tires, buckets, and other water-holding objects.
- Avoid spending time outdoors at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are apt to be most active and if you are outside at that time use mosquito repellant.
- Clean birdbaths and change the water and at least once a week.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools or drain and cover if not in use; prevent water from accumulating in pool covers.
- Unclog gutters and down spouts.
- Make sure screens fit tightly in doors and windows.

Extensive West Nile Virus information and periodic updates are available on the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment website at www.scchealth.org. Information is also available by calling 636-949-7400.

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