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HEALTH OFFICIALS ISSUE MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES ADVISORY FOR WEST NILE VIRUS



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Daytona Beach, Fla.— An increase in the number of sentinel chickens testing positive for the West Nile virus has prompted the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County (DOH-Volusia) to issue a health advisory.

No human cases of West Nile virus infection have been confirmed in Volusia County. However, the risk of transmission to humans has increased.

Sentinel chickens are used to detect some mosquito-borne illnesses, such as West Nile virus. The birds do not develop disease symptoms but will test positive to antibodies if infected.

While nearly 80 percent of West Nile virus infections are asymptomatic, people who do develop symptoms may experience mild illness including headache, fever, pain, and fatigue. According to DOH, less than one percent of infected people develop the most severe form of disease, which may involve meningitis and encephalitis and can cause irreversible neurological damage, paralysis, coma or death.

While the peak period of transmission in Florida is July through September, mosquito-borne diseases can be transmitted throughout the fall. West Nile Virus is transmitted to wild birds by *Culex* mosquitoes. Occasionally, an infected mosquito will bite a human or animal (particularly horses) and cause disease. *Culex* mosquitoes are known to bite from dusk to dawn.

Volusia County Mosquito Control and DOH-Volusia continue surveillance and prevention efforts. Residents and visitors should avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by taking basic precautions help to limit exposure, including:

DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools and keep them appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- **Clothing** - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- **Repellent** - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
 - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and IR3535 are effective.
 - Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) are generally recommended. Other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or IR3535. These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients to be listed on the product label.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of three years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than two months old.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house.

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

For more information on what repellent is right for you, consider using the Environmental Protection Agency's search tool to help you choose skin-applied repellent products: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/oppref/insect/#searchform>.

The Department continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus infections, Eastern equine encephalitis, St. Louis encephalitis, malaria, chikungunya and dengue. Residents of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds via the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's site - <http://legacy.myfwc.com/bird/default.asp>. For more information, visit [DOH's website](#).

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