

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Laura Brazell (Walton)
(850) 892-8040, Ext. 1163
Rick Davis (Holmes)
(850) 547-8500

MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASE ALERT IN EFFECT FOR WALTON AND HOLMES COUNTIES
-- Holmes County confirms two human cases and Walton County confirms third human case of West Nile Virus --

WALTON AND HOLMES COUNTY — Today, Walton County Health Department Administrator, Holly B. Holt and Holmes County Health Department Administrator, Rick Davis announced that the Florida Department of Health (DOH) has issued a mosquito-borne illness alert for Holmes County where two human cases of West Nile Virus have been confirmed, with one case possibly having exposure in Walton County. The mosquito-borne disease alert continues in Walton County where a third human case of West Nile Virus has been confirmed. The possibility that others may become infected with the virus remains extremely high, and the health department strongly encourages the public to continue to take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Members of the public who develop a fever or other signs of illness should consult with their health care provider. Health care providers should contact Walton or Holmes County Health Department if they suspect an individual may be infected with a mosquito-borne illness.

Both county health departments remind residents and visitors to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. County mosquito control offices and the health departments continue surveillance and prevention efforts and encourage everyone to take basic precautions to help limit exposure by following the Department of Health recommendations.

To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to **'DRAIN AND COVER.'**

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 in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

Cover skin with clothing or repellent:

- 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.
- Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house. Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches and patios.

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 are generally recommended. Other US Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR 3535. 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 CDC, mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of 3 years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 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.

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito borne illnesses. Residents of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission web site at <http://www.myfwc.com/bird/>. For more information, visit DOH's Environmental Public Health web site at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/index.html> or call the Walton County Health Department at (850) 892-8021 or the Holmes County Health Department at (850) 547-8500.

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