

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS ADVISORY
FIRST CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS REPORTED IN SANTA ROSA COUNTY

Milton, FL - The Santa Rosa County Health Department has received confirmation of the county's first case of West Nile Virus. The possibility that other individuals may become infected with the virus is extremely high. Santa Rosa Mosquito Control is continuing to spray and the health department encourages the public to continue to take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

"As our neighboring counties began to see confirmed cases, we fully expected that we would begin to see them as well," said Sandra Park-O'Hara, A.R.N.P., administrator of the Santa Rosa County Health Department. "People need to be aware that the virus is present in our area, and continue to take precautions."

First reported in the United States in 1999, by 2004 West Nile Virus had spread throughout the continental U.S. The virus is spread by mosquitoes and the majority of cases have been reported in birds. The virus is transmitted to a mosquito when it bites an infected bird. The mosquito can then transfer the virus by biting another animal or a person. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website, there is no specific treatment for WNV and as many as 80 per cent of those who become infected may display no symptoms and recover well on their own. About 20 per cent experience symptoms similar to the flu. Less than one percent of those infected become seriously ill, but severe cases can be fatal. Those most at risk are individuals over the age of 50 or those who have had an organ transplant.

The easiest and best way to avoid West Nile Virus is by preventing mosquito bites:

- Avoid going outside between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Dress so clothing covers most of your skin.
- Apply mosquito repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide or N,N-diethyl-3-methyl-benzamide), Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus or PMD, or IR3535 (3-[N-Butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid, ethyl ester), and always follow label directions carefully.
- Install screens on windows and doors. Repair any torn or damaged screens.
- **Empty standing water to discourage mosquitoes from laying eggs.** At least once a week, empty yard items such as pets' water dishes, bird baths and flower pots. Clean rain gutters so that water drains freely. Remove trash items, such as discarded tires, that can hold water and provide sites for mosquitoes to lay their eggs.

For more information on West Nile Virus, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.

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