

## **Mosquito Season Is Here – Protect Yourself!!**

With the arrival of flooding rains this past weekend comes also the arrival of the annoying mosquitoes. As you know mosquitoes are not only annoying but can arrive with hidden dangers! West Nile Virus and Lacrosse Encephalitis are again a concern related to mosquitoes. West Nile is a disease that is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. In nature, the disease cycles between birds and mosquitoes. The infection of human, horses, and other mammals are incidental and do not lead to the spread of the disease. It is estimated that less than 1% of all mosquitoes are actually infected with the virus. West Nile Virus is spread by the bite of a West Nile Virus infected mosquito. Mosquitoes get infected with West Nile Virus by feeding on infected birds. Crows, blue jays, and ravens are the types of birds that can be carriers of the virus.

West Nile is a risk to humans as we can get infected with West Nile Virus. Of a person actually infected with the virus, it is estimated that 80% do not experience any symptoms of the disease. The other 20% will likely become mildly ill. The symptoms to look for in these mild cases can include fever, headache, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting, and swollen lymph nodes. About 1 in 150 people infected with the virus becomes seriously ill with West Nile, encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. People at the greatest risk for severe illness are those over the age of 50. The indications for this more serious illness are a sudden high fever, neck stiffness, extreme muscle weakness, convulsions, or disorientation. These symptoms can result in death in about 9-15% of cases. Those who are infected with the virus and recover will, however, become immune for the rest of their lives.

There is no vaccine or means of treatment for the disease in humans but you can take some steps to reduce the risk of exposure to the disease. Some sound methods for preventing mosquito bites are:

- ❖ Limit outdoor activity during the peak hours for mosquito activity. These hours are around dusk and dawn.
- ❖ Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves on shirts, pants, socks, and shoes.
- ❖ Use an insect repellent containing DEET. When using repellents make sure to follow the instructions on the label. For children 2-12 years use a product with less than 10% DEET and apply the product to the child from your own hands like lotion. A higher DEET value does not mean that the product is more effective at repelling mosquitoes. It relates to the length of time that you are protected.

The most effective way to limit your exposure to the virus is to eliminate mosquito breeding habitat on your property and encourage neighbors to do the same. The recent flooding rain in Green Lake County this Spring have caused perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes as it is likely they will find many sources of stagnant water in which to lay their eggs and complete their life cycle.

The best way to destroy breeding habitat is to eliminate these sources of standing water.

Some items to focus on are; used tires, plastic wading pools, bird baths, roof gutters, and other things that hold water for an extended period of time.

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