

West Nile Virus: Positive mosquitoes reported in Chase County

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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One out of six tested pools of mosquitoes in Chase County have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) according to the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. Positive mosquito pools were found statewide in Dawes, Dawson, Garden, Scottsbluff, Sheridan and Webster counties according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

This follows reported positive human cases in Scottsbluff & Douglas counties, and North Central, Central & Southwest Nebraska Public Health Districts. "People get the West Nile Virus from an infected female mosquito bite and our concern is the virus has no vaccine," states Tami Herskowitz, Surveillance Nurse at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. "I encourage residents to prevent getting mosquito bites with personal protection and making adjustments to their surroundings."

To prevent mosquito bites, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:

- Applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Wearing long-sleeved shirt, pants and socks at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Install or repair screens on window and doors. Use your air conditioning.
- Empty standing water from containers such as flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires and birdbaths.

The risk of WNV infection is highest for people who work outside or participate in outdoor activities because of greater exposure to mosquitoes. Outbreaks have been occurring every summer since 1999 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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People with medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension and kidney disease are also at greater risk for serious illness with the West Nile Virus. “If you think a family member might have West Nile virus disease consult your healthcare provider for a diagnosis,” explains Herskowitz.

Diagnosis is based on a combination of clinical signs and symptom and specialized lab tests of blood or spinal fluid. These tests typically detect antibodies that the immune system makes against the viral infection according to the CDC.

More information on West Nile Virus may be found at our web site www.swhealth.ne.gov or call the McCook office at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street in McCook.