

# Staying Alert – Being Prepared

## West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) is present in Kansas. In 2005, the virus has been found in Anderson, Barton, Crawford, Decatur, Douglas, Ellis, Johnson, Mitchell, Reno, Rice, Stafford, Trego and Wallace counties. These are the counties with confirmed, detected and reported cases of the virus, however it is considered to be present throughout Kansas. “All Kansans should take precautions no matter which part of the state they live in,” said KDHE Director of Health, Howard Rodenberg, M.D. M.P.H. “West Nile Virus can be present in an area well before it’s confirmed in test results and reported.”

Human cases in Kansas typically appear in mid summer, then increase through the late summer months and early fall months. “August and September are the peak months of infection in Kansas, so we must all take precautions to reduce our risk of becoming infected with West Nile Virus,” said Gail Hansen, KDHE State Epidemiologist. “This includes wearing insect repellent when outdoors, limiting outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, and draining standing water where possible or using a larvicide.”

- ✦ WNV is primarily a disease of birds, spread by infected mosquitoes to people, but it is not contagious from person to person.
- ✦ Symptoms range from mild (slight headache and low grade fever) to extreme (neurological disease - swelling of the brain or brain tissue) and in rare cases, death.
- ✦ Once a person contracts WNV, they are immune to it.

Most healthy people infected with WNV show either no symptoms or illness or only mild symptoms. About 20% of those infected show symptoms 3 – 15 days after the mosquito bite. Since the symptoms are not specific to WNV, only special laboratory tests can confirm a diagnosis of WNV.

## Preventive Measures

To be prepared against WNV, take personal precautions including use of an approved insect repellent, and reduce mosquito breeding grounds.

- ✦ Use an insect repellent on the skin. In addition to those that contain DEET, repellents containing Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus are effective in repelling mosquitoes. The label directions for all repellents should be closely followed.
- ✦ Wear protective clothing when practical.
- ✦ Remove standing water – where mosquitoes breed (i.e. clogged gutters or unused tires).
- ✦ Use larvicide in water that cannot be drained or removed.
- ✦ Change water every three days in bird baths, pet bowls, and wading pools.
- ✦ Limit outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- ✦ If a dead bird is found, KDHE recommends you wear gloves, place it in a plastic bag, and dispose of it in the garbage.

For more information on West Nile Virus, go to [www.westnileks.com](http://www.westnileks.com), or call KDHE's toll-free automated WNV Info Hotline 1-877-228-2287, or contact Miami County Emergency Management at 294-4444.