Human Cases Punctuate the Need for Precautions Against West Nile Virus

Mosquitoes carrying the virus have been found across the state

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah public health officials are reminding all residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites whenever they spend time outside. So far, there have been two confirmed human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) in Utah, and positive mosquito pools have been identified in several Utah counties, including Box Elder, Cache, Carbon, Davis, Duchesne, Salt Lake, Uintah and Utah.

While West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, not all mosquitoes carry the virus. The mosquitoes that carry the virus are typically out from dusk to dawn. UDOH epidemiologist Keegan McCaffrey warns, “There is no vaccine for humans. So, taking simple precautions to avoid mosquito bites is the key to reducing your risk for infection.” Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus when outdoors. Adults and children older than two months of age can safely use repellents that contain up to 30% DEET. Repellents are not recommended for children younger than two months of age.

Other precautionary measures include:

- Wear long sleeved shirts and pants while outdoors.

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Health Officials Encourage Precautions Against West Nile Virus

- Remove any puddles or standing water around your home where mosquitoes can breed, including birdbaths, swimming/wading pools, old tires, buckets and plant containers.
- Contact a veterinarian for information on vaccinating horses.

While most people infected by the virus won't notice any symptoms, some people may experience flu-like symptoms or worse. The elderly and people with poor immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness which can lead to hospitalization, disability, or even death. Symptoms of the severe form of West Nile virus include: high fever, severe headache and stiff neck, disorientation and confusion. If you are experiencing symptoms of West Nile virus, please contact your health care provider immediately.

West Nile virus surveillance in Utah is underway and will continue into the fall. For more information, call your local health department or visit [www.health.utah.gov/wnv](http://www.health.utah.gov/wnv). Throughout the West Nile virus season, the UDOH web site will be updated each Wednesday with available detection information.

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