



South Central District Health

Keeping your family & community healthy
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Twin Falls County Agencies Urge Caution after West Nile Virus Deaths, Spike in Number of Cases

Twin Falls County Commissioners, Twin Falls County Parks and Water Ways Dept., and South Central District Health are urging people to take extra precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites while they enjoy the great outdoors this summer. People attending activities near water are especially encouraged to use mosquito repellent containing DEET and wear long sleeves and long pants when mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk. DEET is not recommended for use on children under 2 months of age.

As of August 9, according to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's West Nile website (www.westnile.idaho.gov), 109 Idaho residents have tested positive for West Nile infection in 2006, with 11 of those reported with neuroinvasive disease, a serious form of the illness. The number of cases statewide has more than doubled in the last five days. In addition to human cases, 113 horses and 60 birds have tested positive for the disease. So far this year, 22 Idaho counties have reported West Nile activity, including Blaine, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, and Twin Falls counties. Gooding County posted the third highest number of cases in the state on the August 9 report. Statistics reported on the www.westnile.idaho.gov website are updated daily.

A man from Elmore County and a woman from Lincoln County, both over the age of 70, have died from West Nile virus this summer. In addition, a youth who tested positive for both West Nile virus and Rocky Mountain spotted fever has also died. He became infected with both diseases while attending a youth camp in Gooding County.

"Just like the rest of the nation, West Nile has become part of our ecosystem," said Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, deputy state epidemiologist. "If you see mosquitoes, you should consider that they may carry

West Nile and take precautions to avoid their bite.” She says people across southern Idaho should consider West Nile to be as close as the mosquitoes in their backyards.

To protect themselves from mosquito bites, she advises people to:

- Apply insect repellent approved by the EPA to exposed skin and clothing. Follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors by wearing long-pants and long-sleeved shirts;
- Avoid mosquitoes when they are most active at dawn and dusk;
- Insect-proof homes by repairing or replacing screens;
- Reduce standing water on property that provides mosquito breeding habitat, such as bird baths and decorative ponds; and
- Report dead birds to your local Fish and Game office.

West Nile Virus: Signs and Symptoms

West Nile virus is transmitted by mosquitoes and has spread across all of the US over the past three years. Most human infections of West Nile virus are mild or have no symptoms. Approximately 20 percent of those infected develop a generally mild fever that lasts from 3 to 6 days and begins from 3 to 14 days after infection.

Symptoms often include: fever and headache, muscle aches, tiredness, nausea and vomiting, eye pain, skin rash, and enlarged lymph nodes. Less than one percent of people infected develop serious neurological disease. Those over age 50 are more susceptible to serious complications from the virus.

People are encouraged to consult their health care provider if they have concerns about their health. Although there is no treatment against the virus, supportive therapy and treatment of symptoms is usually followed until the patient recovers. Blood tests are available for those with symptoms, but two samples three weeks apart are needed for confirmation of West Nile virus.

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