



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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**NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

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Test Confirms First West Nile Virus of the Season

The first mosquito pool to test positive for West Nile virus in 2012 is prompting health officials to remind people to take precautions to “fight the bite.” The mosquitoes were detected by the Ada County Mosquito Abatement District in a trap in Boise, near the Expo Idaho fairgrounds. The virus is showing up a little earlier this year than in 2011, when Idaho didn’t see signs of it until August.

Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, Deputy State Epidemiologist with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare states that “conditions are favorable for mosquitoes right now throughout the state; it is important that everyone protect themselves from biting mosquitoes.”

West Nile virus is usually contracted from the bite of an infected mosquito; it is not spread from person-to-person through casual contact. Symptoms of infection often include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach, and back. In some cases the virus can cause severe illness, especially in people over the age of 50. Last year, three people were reported with WNV. In 2006, Idaho led the nation in West Nile illnesses with almost 1,000 infections, which contributed to 23 deaths.

To reduce the likelihood of infection, people are advised to avoid mosquitoes, particularly between dusk and dawn when they are most active. In addition, you should:

- Apply DEET or other EPA-approved insect repellent to exposed skin and clothing. Carefully follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors;
- Insect-proof your home by repairing or replacing screens; and
- Reduce standing water on your property. Check and drain toys, trays or pots which may hold water and change bird baths and static decorative ponds weekly as they may provide a suitable mosquito breeding habitat.

West Nile virus does not usually affect domestic animals, including dogs and cats, but can cause severe illness in horses and certain species of birds. Although there is no vaccine available for people, there are several vaccines available for horses. People are advised to have their horses vaccinated annually.

For more information, visit www.westnile.idaho.gov.