

News Release

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Three locations in Knox County test positive for West Nile Virus

Trapping and testing of mosquitoes in Knox County has resulted in the positive identification of West Nile Virus (WNV) in three different locations. Late Monday, the Knox County Health Department received notification of the positive results from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) which had placed the mosquito traps at the end of July

The positive samples were collected in Fredericktown, Gambier and the Apple Valley area of Howard.

Knox County joins 19 other Ohio counties with positive WNV activity including neighboring Richland and Licking counties. As of Monday, ODH and local health departments have placed traps in 43 counties this summer, collecting nearly 8,000 samples of which over 200,000 mosquitoes were tested. Despite the positive collections, there have been no reports of West Nile Virus in humans

Nate Overholt, environmental health director with the Knox County Health Department said the agency “will conduct pesticide spraying in the areas where the positive mosquitoes were trapped.” The environmental health staff will also treat areas of standing water with larvacide to help reduce the mosquito population.

“The entire state is seeing an earlier onset of mosquitos infected with West Nile Virus than in years past,” said Overholt. Statewide, positive cases were on the rise early in July. Last year, an increase in positive cases did not happen until mid-August. The last positive collection of infected mosquitoes in Knox County was in late August 2015.

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WNV is spread to humans from the bite of an infected mosquito, which gets the virus from biting an infected bird. The virus can cause an infection in humans that can lead to encephalitis. Many types of birds can be infected, but crows and blue jays are most likely to die from the disease. Horses are also prone to WNV.

Most people who become infected with WNV do not have any symptoms. About one in five people who become infected develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Less than 1 percent of infected people develop a serious neurologic illness, such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues).

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection, and care is based on symptoms.

Overholt urged local residents to take personal measures to protect themselves from mosquitoes. Those measures include using insect repellent containing DEET and emptying water-holding containers such as plant saucers, outdoor toys, old tires and other items around your home. Mosquitoes need just a small amount of water to lay their eggs which hatch in just a day or two.

“Mosquitoes are likely to be biting between dusk and dawn,” said Overholt. “If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, cover up by wearing shoes, socks, long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Also, wear, light colors. They are less attractive to mosquitoes.”

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