

# Mosquito Tests Positive for West Nile in Red Willow County

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CONTACT: Darcey Hansen, RN  
308-345-1790

Email: [rwhealth@mccooknet.com](mailto:rwhealth@mccooknet.com)

McCook, NE – A mosquito in Red Willow County has tested positive for West Nile Virus, according to a report just received to the Red Willow County Health Department.

“With a positive test in a mosquito in McCook, and recently reported in Chase county, the time is now to take measures to avoid mosquito bites,” said Darcey Hansen, RN, Director of RWCHD. “Prevention is the key to staying clear of the West Nile Virus infection,” she continued. These measures include using insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535; dressing in long-sleeved shirts, pants and socks when outside; limiting outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active and eliminating standing water breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Surveillance efforts will continue throughout the peak West Nile Virus season. Red Willow County Health Department continues to serve as a collection point for dead birds to be brought into the office by the public. “We rely on the public to report dead birds for testing,” said Nancy Miller, LPN, Public Health Nurse at RWCHD. She continued, “Birds that have been dead less than 24 hours and well-preserved are eligible for testing, so they should be brought to RWCHD immediately. Use rubber gloves when picking up a dead bird. If you do not have gloves, insert your hand into an inside-out plastic bag to collect it. Upon collection, place in a sealed plastic bag, and chill. Wash hands thoroughly after contact with a dead bird.”

According to the West Nile Virus Surveillance Program at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, mild cases of West Nile infection may include a slight fever and/or headache. Severe infections are marked by a rapid onset of a high fever, head and body aches, and usually occur five to 15 days after exposure. There is no specific treatment of viral infections, other than to treat the symptoms and provide supportive care. Those who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill from West Nile infection are persons who are over the age of 50. Healthy children and adults are at very low risk for infection.

Surveillance data in Nebraska shows the peak year of West Nile infections was 2003, when 1,994 cases were reported in humans with 27 deaths. In recent years, 2010 had 39 human cases with 2 deaths and 2011 had 29 human cases with 0 deaths. This year, 2 cases have been reported thus far in Nebraska. For more information, contact the Red Willow County Health Department at 308-345-1790 or the district health department at 308-345-4223.

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