



**Ford County Public Health
Department
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July 25, 2017
For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus Positive Bird Reported in Ford County

The Ford County Public Health Department is reporting the first West Nile virus positive bird sample detected in Ford County for 2017. "The positive bird is an indication that West Nile virus is circulating in our area and individuals should take appropriate preventive measures to protect their health," states Nancy Mandamuna, Environmental Health Specialist for the Ford County Public Health Department.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common West Nile virus symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus.

Mandamuna further states, "The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include practicing the three "R's" – reduce, repel and report."

* **REDUCE** exposure - Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night. Eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles.

* **REPEL** mosquitoes - When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon

eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.

* REPORT mosquito breeding grounds - In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

Surveillance for West Nile virus includes laboratory tests on mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile-like disease symptoms. If a dead bird is found between May 1 and October 15 and appears to have died of natural causes, you should report it to the Ford County Public Health Department at (217)379-9281. For more information on public health issues, visit the Ford County Public Health Department's website at www.fordcountyphd.org. Additional information about West Nile virus may be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health's web page: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/west-nile-virus>.

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