

Fort Detrick Information Bulletin



Prepared by the Public Affairs Office – 12 August 2002

West Nile Virus Update and Tips

A dead crow found on Fort Detrick at the end of July was recently confirmed as testing positive with West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first confirmation for the West Nile Virus in a bird at Fort Detrick. Fort Detrick began routinely testing for the West Nile Virus in mosquitoes and birds in 1999.

“We will continue to maintain an extensive surveillance and testing program, not only in the area where the crow was found but throughout the post,” stated Col. John E. Ball, commander, U.S. Army Garrison. “A system is in place on post for reporting potential mosquito breeding areas and sightings of dead birds so they may be tested.”

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding WNV Precautions

- ***What is the connection between birds, mosquitoes, and West Nile Virus?***

WNV is usually a disease of birds spread by mosquitoes. The mosquitoes become infected when they feed on WNV-infected birds, and after an incubation period of 3 days to 2 weeks, these infected mosquitoes can transmit the virus to humans and animals when biting to take blood (noting that only female mosquitoes take blood and transmit the virus).

- ***Will I get sick if a mosquito bites me?***

Probably not. Even when bitten by a WNV-infected mosquito, most people do not get sick.

- ***What are the symptoms of WNV?***

Symptoms of WNV in humans are usually mild and may include flu-like symptoms (fever, headache, swollen glands, and/or rash). More severe reactions include high fever, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, and muscle weakness. Deaths linked to the disease have been reported but are rare.

- ***What is being done at Fort Detrick?***

Industrial Hygiene/Environmental Health and Directorate of Installation Services personnel have already begun early detection and control of mosquito breeding areas; collection and testing of adult mosquitoes for WNV began in late May.

- ***What can I do to prevent WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses?***
 - Take corrective measures if you see areas or objects around buildings or homes that could collect and hold water (clean and/or store upside-down any water collecting containers such as buckets, flowerpots, cigarette ash/butt containers).
 - Maintain wading pools, birdbaths, and pet dishes to ensure stagnate water does not collect in them. Small wading pools should be emptied after each use and ornamental ponds should be aerated and/or stocked with fish.
 - Ensure covers on outdoor furniture, play sets, lawn tools, and other equipment do not collect pockets of water.
 - Clean and maintain roof gutters so that they drain properly and ensure water does not collect at the bottom of drain spouts.

- ***How do I avoid being bitten by mosquitoes?***
 - Avoid or minimize mosquito bites by reducing time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most active (dawn and dusk).
 - Wear pants, long sleeves, shoes, and socks if you are outdoors when mosquitoes are active.
 - Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET on exposed skin (read label precautions carefully to ensure proper use for children and pregnant women). Effective repellents contain 20-35% DEET, however, products with high concentrations of DEET (greater than 35%) should be avoided, especially for children.
 - Ensure screens on doors and windows are in good condition and fit tightly.
 - Do not rely on ineffective measures to avoid mosquito bites (Vitamin B, 'ultrasonic' devices, and bug zappers).

- ***What if I find dead birds or see mosquito-breeding sites?***
 - Do not attempt to collect any birds or mosquitoes yourself.
 - If you spot actual or potential mosquito breeding sites, immediately contact the IH/EH Office at 301-619-7471.
 - If you find a dead bird, immediately contact the DIS Service Order Desk at 301-619-2726.

More information is available on the Centers for Disease Control's Web Page at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm. For information about Fort Detrick's surveillance and testing program, contact the Public Affairs Office at 301-619-2018.

September 13, 2002

Results received yesterday from the National Wildlife Health Center indicate an American Crow collected on 12 August 2002 from the South/Southwest side of Nallin Farm Pond tested positive for West Nile Virus. This is the second crow to test positive at Fort Detrick.

Additionally, mosquitoes collected and tested from various traps located throughout the post tested positive for WNV. From collections conducted from 11 June through 5 September 2002, 2,046 total mosquitoes collected which were divided into pools of not more than 25 each for a total of 171 pools of mosquitoes tested for West Nile Virus. Of these 171 pools, 7 pools tested positive. It is important to note that all the 7 positive pools occurred after 20 August. The testing shows the distribution is more wide-spread and the number of mosquitoes positive for WNV is increasing.

The Fort Detrick Environmental Health staff and others conducted on-site physical surveys to assess current and additional potential mosquito breeding areas. Personnel from the Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine Entomology Division are analyzing the pools of mosquitoes most recently collected and will determine the potential significance of these positive findings. Appropriate steps are being taken to increase surveillance.

Everyone at Fort Detrick is once again asked to continue to look for ways around their homes and work areas to reduce mosquitoes' primary breeding ground and standing water. Additionally, increased diligence to prevent mosquito bites is warranted through the employment of personal protective measures previously discussed, such as the wearing of full length trouser and long sleeved clothing, as well as the liberal use of insect repellents containing DEET, particularly at dusk and dawn.

If you spot actual or potential mosquito breeding sites, immediately contact the IH/EH Office at 301-619-7471. If you find a dead bird, immediately contact the DIS Service Order Desk at 301-619-2726.

More information is available on the Fort Detrick web page: <http://www.detrick.army.mil/> and the Center's for Disease Control's Web Page at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.