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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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West Nile Virus Activity Detected in Michigan
MDCH Urges Residents to “Fight the Bite” of Mosquitoes During the Summer Season

LANSING – As the weather warms up and people begin to spend more time outdoors, Michigan residents should protect themselves from mosquito bites. The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) would like to remind people, especially those spending time outdoors and children at camps, to protect themselves from mosquito illnesses by taking a few precautionary steps.

Mosquitoes in Michigan can carry illnesses such as West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Mosquito-borne diseases can cause mild symptoms, severe infections requiring hospitalization, and even death. West Nile virus was recently detected in a wild turkey from Gratiot County. The turkey, which was reported to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and confirmed positive by the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population & Animal Health is the first WNV positive animal detected in Michigan for 2013.

The *Culex* species of mosquito that transmits WNV in Michigan thrives in hot, dry climates because it breeds in stagnant water that has not been flushed out by periodic heavy rain. With the drought conditions last summer, there were a large number of human WNV cases throughout the nation and in Michigan. Last year, WNV was responsible for 202 illnesses and 17 fatalities reported in Michigan. Nationally 5,674 WNV cases and 286 deaths were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“One bite from an infected mosquito can lead to a severe and possibly life-altering illness. We know that prevention is key to protection,” says Dr. Matthew Davis, Chief Medical Executive at the MDCH. “Taking a few minutes to protect ourselves and our loved ones from mosquito bites can make a big difference.”

Protection is as easy as remembering to take these simple steps:

1. **Avoid mosquito bites:** Use insect repellent when outdoors especially from dusk to dawn. Look for EPA-labeled products containing active ingredients, such as DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Apply more repellent, according to label instructions, if mosquitoes start to bite.
2. **Mosquito-proof homes:** Fix or install window and door screens and cover or eliminate empty containers with standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs.
3. **Help your community:** Report dead birds to Michigan’s West Nile website (www.michigan.gov/westnile) to help track WNV and support community-based mosquito control programs.
4. **Horse owners should vaccinate their horses.** Horses can be infected too. Vaccines for WNV and EEE are readily available and should be repeated at least annually. Talk to your veterinarian for details.

For more information about diseases carried by mosquitoes such as WNV, visit www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases or www.cdc.gov.

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