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Mosquitoes bring the first sign of West Nile virus for 2008

The first West Nile virus activity in Oregon this year has been reported in Baker County.

Emilio DeBess DVM, state public health veterinarian and epidemiologist with the Oregon Department of Human Services State Public Health Division, said a pool of mosquitoes gathered last week by the Baker Valley Vector Control District was found to be positive for the virus.

The mosquitoes were analyzed at the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

According to Jim Lunders, a biologist and manager of the Baker Valley Vector Control District, the area has been sprayed with adulticide to kill the adult mosquitoes as part of the routine work of the district. In addition, the district has stepped up both its larval and adult mosquito control measures in response to the increased risk of mosquito-borne disease. The district is also continuing to monitor for the virus in both mosquitoes and birds.

DeBess said the findings should alert Oregonians to the need for precautions against the virus, which is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes.

Most infections are mild, with fever and flu-like symptoms but severe infections may cause inflammation of the brain and, rarely, death.

In 2007 Oregon recorded 27 human cases of West Nile virus, with two cases acquired by Oregonians who became infected in other states. For the past two years the first evidence of the virus has been found in Baker County.

Most of the human cases in 2007 occurred in eastern Oregon, with 12 cases originating in Malheur County, just south of Baker County.

Washington State health officials also received word of the first West Nile virus activity in that state this year with a positive mosquito pool found in Benton County.

WNV Prevention Advice

- Use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon, eucalyptus, or IR3535.
- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, and a hat to reduce bites.
- Check screen doors and windows for openings that might allow mosquitoes indoors.
- Decrease standing water to the greatest extent possible, particularly around the home.

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