



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY WORKING TO DETECT, PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County’s annual West Nile Virus prevention and remediation efforts are now under way for 2023.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that was first reported in Pennsylvania in 2000 and is found in almost every county, every year.

Ken Hess, West Nile Virus Coordinator for both Fayette and Washington counties, said Fayette’s first-confirmed case of the virus in a mosquito was found on the border of Fairchance Borough and Georges Township in late May.

“It was found in just one mosquito sample, and there are no cases in humans at this time. It was detected during our first week of trapping, which is the earliest we’ve ever had it in Fayette County,” Hess said. “We’ve never had a year where we haven’t found at least one affected mosquito, so it’s pretty common.”

CDC officials say WNV is transmitted when Culex mosquitos bite one of several types of infected birds. Those mosquitos can spread the virus in about one week by biting other birds, horses or humans. Infection from such a mosquito can lead to illness or death, and, although everyone is at risk of contracting WNV, people aged 50 and older are at increased risk for a more severe form of the disease.

Hess said the area where the first mosquito was found has been thoroughly sprayed with a barrier treatment, and testing for additional WNV-positive mosquitos is ongoing in the area.

“We’re going to continue monitoring and sampling throughout the year. We don’t want anyone to get sick or worse,” he said. “There’s no reason for the public to be alarmed right now, but with their help, we can limit the spread.”

The CDC recommends the following practices for protecting against WNV and other mosquito-borne diseases:

- Use insect repellent on your skin, clothing and gear before spending time outside. Always follow the product label instructions, as some may require reapplication every few hours.
- Dress children in clothing covering their arms and legs or cover cribs, strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.
- Use screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Use air conditioning when possible.

- Prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs by emptying, scrubbing, turning over, covering or discarding items on your property that hold standing water; such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, trash containers and more.

“You also want to make sure your grass stays short, so mosquitos don’t have habitats to hang out in. If you reduce the habitat, you’re less likely to attract nuisance species all around,” Hess said. “Now’s the time to take precautions while it’s still early in the season. We all know mosquitoes get worse as the summer goes on.”

To learn more about preventing West Nile Virus, contact khess@fayettepa.org or visit www.dep.pa.gov.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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