



*"Inspiring Better Health for All"*

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<http://forestcountypublichealth.org/>

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## First Confirmed West Nile Virus Activity Found in Wisconsin This Year

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has confirmed the first West Nile virus (WNV) activity in the state this year. One person has been diagnosed with WNV illness in Barron County, and mosquitoes collected from Milwaukee and Lafayette Counties have tested positive for WNV.

WNV is spread to people, birds, and other animals through the bite of a mosquito that has WNV. Mosquitoes get WNV by feeding on birds with the WNV. Most people with WNV report becoming ill in August and September.

Most people who have the virus do not show signs of the illness. Those who do become ill with WNV may experience fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, rash, and fatigue. Some people will develop severe illness with symptoms that include high fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, disorientation, mental confusion, tremors, paralysis, seizure, and coma. Older adults and people who have weak immune systems have a greater chance of getting a severe illness that can be fatal. It is important that people contact a health care provider if they suspect they have WNV illness.

Forest County Health Department would like to remind everyone to take steps to prevent mosquito bites and possible disease. Take the following steps to keep you and your loved ones healthy.

### Avoid mosquito bites

- Apply an insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 to exposed skin and clothing.
- Before heading outdoors, treat clothing with permethrin; do not apply permethrin directly to skin.
- Do Not Do outdoor activities during evening or early morning hours, when mosquitoes that spread WNV are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from skin.

Prevent mosquitoes from breeding around homes by removing stagnant water from items around the property. For example:



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- Empty standing water that has collected in tin cans, plastic containers, flower pots, discarded tires, roof gutters, and downspouts.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, kiddie pools, buckets, and small boats such as canoes and kayaks when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair and tightly fitted to prevent mosquitoes from getting inside.
- Trim or mow tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.

For more information on prevention and symptoms of West Nile virus (WNV), please visit the DHS website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/mosquito/wnv.htm>. You can also call the Forest County Health Department at 715-478-3371 with any questions or concerns.