



Fact Sheet

Cathy Wolfe
District One
Diane Oberquell
District Two
Robert N. Macleod
District Three

West Nile Virus

- **What is it?** West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that normally affects birds and occasionally *may* cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord) in humans.
- **How is it transmitted?** Mosquitoes pick up the virus from infected crows, jays, ravens or other birds. The insects can then transmit the illness to other birds. Humans, horses, and other animals can be infected when exposed to disease carrying mosquitoes. The virus **cannot** be transmitted from human to human or from other animals to humans.
- **How contagious is it?** Not very. According to the Centers for Disease Control, less than one percent of humans bitten by an infected mosquito will contract the virus.
- **How fatal is it?** Most people who contract the virus will suffer only mild, flu-like symptoms. However, in rare cases, WNV may result in a fatal case of encephalitis.
- **What can I do to avoid infection?**
 - ✓ Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants in mosquito infested areas. Avoid such areas at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
 - ✓ Screen doors and windows.
 - ✓ Use an insect repellent containing DEET—carefully follow application directions.
 - ✓ Eliminate places where mosquitoes can breed: old tires, kiddie pools, and other containers where water can accumulate. Clean gutters so water can flow freely.
 - ✓ Encourage mosquito predators such as birds, fish, bats, dragonflies and frogs.
 - ✓ Ultrasonic devices and taking vitamin B-12 will **not** prevent mosquito bites.
- **Pesticide application of private wetlands is strongly discouraged.**
 - ✓ The state Department of Ecology and U.S. Department of Agriculture strictly regulate pesticide application.
 - ✓ Pesticides can be costly and damaging to the environment and ineffective, often killing natural mosquito predators.
 - ✓ Pesticides need to be applied repeatedly to kill succeeding generations of larvae.
 - ✓ While a pesticide application may eliminate or reduce mosquito larvae in a specific pond, it cannot prevent the migration of mosquitoes from other locations.
- **What do I do if I find a dead bird?**
 - ✓ Report the bird to the county Health Department. If reporting by phone, include type of bird (if known), location, apparent cause and estimated time of death.
 - ✓ Be sure to wear gloves when handling the carcass. While WNV cannot be contacted from live or dead birds, other diseases can.
- **Contact Numbers**
 - ✓ City of Tumwater – Water Resources – Dan Smith: 754-4140
 - ✓ Thurston County Health Department: 754:3355, ext. 7524
 - ✓ Dead Bird Reporting: 754-3355, ext. 6659
 - ✓ Thurston County Water and Waste Management: 357-2491
 - ✓ Washington State Department of Ecology: 407-6000
 - ✓ Washington State Department of Health Toll Free Line: 1-866-78VIRUS
 - ✓ County Health Dept. website: www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/welcome.html

4/28/03