



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Second Alabama resident dies from West Nile virus in 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael G. Likos, M.P.H.
(334) 206-5936

Mel Stephens, D.V.M.
(334) 206-2051

The Alabama Department of Public Health reports the second Alabama death in 2005 as a result of infection with West Nile virus. Both individuals were male residents of Montgomery County, one middle aged and the other elderly. Eight positive human cases have been reported in Dallas, Elmore and Montgomery counties so far this year. The total of eight cases this year compares with 15 in the entire year of 2004, 38 in 2003, and 49 in 2002.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that as of Oct. 25 there had been 73 deaths nationwide as a result of West Nile virus this year.

As the weather continues to cool in Alabama, mosquito activity should dramatically decrease and the risk of West Nile virus transmission should decrease as well.

West Nile and other mosquito-borne viruses such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis are transmitted from bird to mosquito to bird. Occasionally, the same mosquitoes will take blood from mammals, including humans and horses. Mosquitoes pick up the virus by feeding on the blood of infected birds. The disease cannot be spread from person to person or from animals to people. All mosquito-borne diseases can be prevented by taking simple measures to avoid mosquito bites.

The virus has also been found in six horses in Bibb, Chambers, Colbert, Escambia and St. Clair counties; in four birds in Jefferson, Lee, Mobile and Shelby counties; and in seven mosquito pools in Jefferson, Lee and Macon counties during 2005.

Even though fall is here, health officials remind the public of these practical strategies to prevent mosquito bites and mosquito-borne viruses:

PERSONAL PROTECTION; CLOTHING AND AROMATICS

- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothes to help prevent mosquitoes from reaching the skin and to retain less heat, making yourself less "attractive" to mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are more attracted to dark colors.
- When possible, wear long sleeves and long pants.
- Avoid perfumes, colognes, fragrant hair sprays, lotions and soaps, which attract mosquitoes.

PERSONAL PROTECTION; REPELLENTS

- Follow the label instructions when applying repellents. Permethrin repellents are only for clothes - not for application on the skin.
- When using repellents avoid contact with eyes, lips and nasal membranes.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Use concentrations of less than 10 percent when applying DEET-containing products on children.
- Apply DEET repellent on arms, legs, and other exposed areas, but never under clothing.
- Citronella candles and repellents containing citronella can help, but their range is limited.
- Herbals such as cedar, geranium, pennyroyal, lavender, cinnamon, and garlic are not very effective.

PERSONAL PROTECTION; AROUND THE HOME

- Mosquito activity peaks at dusk and again at dawn; restrict outdoor activity during these hours.
- Keep windows and door screens in good condition.
- Replace porch lights with yellow light bulbs that will attract fewer insects.
- Mosquitoes breed in standing water; empty all water from old tires, cans, jars, buckets, drums, plastic wading pools, toys, and other containers.
- Clean clogged gutters.
- Remove the rim from potted plants and replace water in plant/flower vases weekly.
- Replenish pet watering dishes daily and rinse bird baths twice weekly.
- Fill tree holes and depressions left by fallen trees with dirt or sand.
- Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito fish or use larvicide "doughnuts."

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