



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Birds free of West Nile virus and avian influenza

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seven dead birds found in Montgomery city limits over the past weekend have tested negative for H5N1 avian influenza and West Nile virus.

Dr. Melburn Stephens, state public health veterinarian, said, "The diseases of public health significance, West Nile virus and avian influenza, have been ruled out. H5N1 avian influenza has not been detected in this hemisphere, so we did not expect the birds to be positive for avian influenza."

Alabama has not detected any evidence of West Nile virus so far in 2006 in birds, mosquitoes or humans. The peak season for human cases is August until the first freeze.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, cautioned, "Despite the absence of positive tests for West Nile virus in birds and mosquitoes in Alabama this year West Nile virus is assumed to be endemic in Alabama and citizens should take appropriate precautions to avoid mosquitoes."

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.
- 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.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- 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."

Contacts for more information:

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