



Yakima Health District

Media Release

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West Nile Virus in Yakima County

Yakima, WA- The Yakima Health District received a report that one horse and one human, a male in his 70s, tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in Yakima County. This is the first human case of WNV in Washington State this year. Additionally, 16 mosquito pool samples tested positive for WNV in Yakima County. The Yakima Health District (YHD) suspects that this is not an isolated occurrence and anticipates that more cases will be reported in the coming weeks and months. Transmission often continues until the first overnight freeze of the autumn, usually in late October or early November.

WNV is spread by bites from mosquitos that acquire the infection from biting infected birds (crows, ravens, magpies, hawks, eagles, robins and some others). About 80% of the WNV infections result in no symptoms. In the other 20%, it causes an illness that begins 2-14 days after the bite. Symptoms can include fever, headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. In some cases, WNV can cause severe illness and death. People experiencing symptoms of WNV should seek health care and avoid mosquitos to prevent spreading the infection.

No specific treatment exists to cure WNV. Treatment is aimed at supporting patients while the immune system eliminates the virus from the body. A vaccine exists that can prevent infection in horses, but it is not approved for use in humans.

To prevent contracting WNV, avoid being bitten by mosquitos:

- Avoid dawn and dusk outdoor activities, wear long sleeves and pants, and use mosquito repellent.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites. These are areas of standing water where mosquitos can lay their eggs: buckets, rain gutters, old tires, leaky outdoor plumbing, bird baths, and ponds-anywhere water collects. Screen doors and windows should fit tightly. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Bug zappers, sonic devices, and mosquito traps have not been shown to reduce the risk of WNV infection.

Information on mosquito repellants:

- Use repellants that contain DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Follow labeled directions carefully.
- Never apply DEET directly to your child's face or put it on children's hands.
- Apply repellent first to your own hands and then onto the child's face.
- Do not use oil of lemon eucalyptus on children under age three.



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Quote

“Please stay cautious and take additional steps to protect yourself and your loved ones to avoid being bitten by mosquitos. While we have confirmed our first human case of West Nile Virus, more cases may be reported. West Nile Virus can be very serious. Additionally, make sure to use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellants and follow the directions carefully.” -Shawn Magee, Environmental Health Director, Yakima Health District

Additional Information

[CDC: West Nile Virus](#)

[CDC: West Nile Virus Prevention](#)

[CDC: West Nile Virus Symptoms](#)

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