

Health Unit Media Release

For Immediate Release: August 8, 2008



DEAD CROW FOUND IN THE PERTH AREA IS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit was notified today that **a dead crow found in the Perth area was positive for West Nile virus. This is the first positive bird found this year within the tri-county area. There have been no positive birds found in the tri-county area since 2006.**

To date in 2008, there have been two human cases of West Nile virus reported in Ontario. Across the province West Nile virus activity has been quiet this year with only three health units reporting positive pools of mosquitoes. There have been no positive mosquito pools in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark to date. Twenty positive birds have been identified across the province.

Jane Lyster, Director of Health Protection with the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit states that “although this is the first positive bird found in the tri-county area, the risk of contracting West Nile Virus disease locally remains low. Results of weekly mosquito testing throughout the Health Unit have been negative for the virus. **Regardless of the risk, positive birds and mosquito pools have been found throughout Ontario, which indicates the virus is still with us and we must still take necessary precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes**”.

The Health Unit will continue monitoring for West Nile virus activity in the community through, the submission of dead crows or blue jays and the trapping of mosquitoes in pre-selected areas. Trapped mosquitoes are tested for the presence of the virus. The Health Unit would like to thank the public for their assistance in reporting dead birds.

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes get the virus by feeding on infected birds. The virus is not transmitted from person to person or from bird to person directly.

While the risk of contracting serious illness from West Nile virus is low, the public can take precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites by:

- **Avoiding areas with high mosquito populations.**
- **Wearing light-coloured clothing, including long sleeves, pants and hat, to cover exposed skin.**
- **Using a mosquito repellent containing DEET. For adults, look for repellents containing 30 per cent DEET or less. Children should wear a repellent with no more than six to 10 per cent DEET. Children under 6 months of age should not use DEET, those six months to two years of age should apply DEET only once per day, and those two to 12 years of age should not apply DEET more than**

- three times per day. Prolonged use of DEET should be avoided.**
- **Making sure all windows and doors in your home have screens that are in good condition.**
- **Taking extra precautions from dusk to dawn when mosquito activity is particularly high.**

Citizens are also encouraged to reduce mosquito-breeding areas on their properties by:

- **Draining any area of standing water or stagnant water on your property.**
- **Removing old tires, turning over pails, toys and wheelbarrows and changing birdbath water frequently.**
- **Keeping your eavestroughs clear to avoid trapping water.**

Further information on West Nile virus, tips to reduce mosquito breeding areas, personal protection from mosquito bites and details on how to report dead birds can be found at <http://www.healthunit.org/westnile/default.htm> or calling the Health Unit's Health Action Line during business hours at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685.

If you find a dead crow or bluejay within the Counties of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, please call the Health Unit at the following numbers: Brockville area 613- 345-5685 or Smiths Falls at 613-283-2740.

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Contact: Jane Lyster, Director of Health Protection, 613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853