

Health Unit Media Release

August 15, 2012



Preventing West Nile Virus Infections

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit would like to remind people about preventing West Nile Virus (WNV) infections.

The mosquito surveillance program began on June 25th, 2012. Trapping and testing of mosquitoes are important in identifying mosquitoes and providing a warning that disease causing mosquitoes are present in a given area.

We all play a role in preventing WNV infections, and when we all do our part we will reduce the risk of this disease in our community.

Each homeowner is encouraged to remove standing water that provides breeding areas for mosquitoes from their property. Most mosquitoes do not travel large distances and thus those breeding within your space are likely to bite you. Protecting yourself from bites by wearing light coloured clothing and applying insect repellents containing the appropriate concentrations of DEET is also recommended.

The municipality is charged with the responsibility of ensuring proper drainage on municipally owned lands and public ditches. The roads departments have the knowledgeable staff and proper equipment to ensure this is achieved. Additionally it is a municipal responsibility to address complaints regarding standing water on private land within its jurisdiction, using applicable property standards bylaws. Should positive mosquito pools be identified in a municipality, it is also the responsibility of council to take the necessary control actions as recommended by the Medical Officer of Health.

The health unit has the responsibility of assessing the risk for WNV within the three counties each year. The presence of the virus in mosquitoes is an early sign that the virus is gaining a presence in an area. The health unit is also responsible for following up any human cases of diseases and, more importantly, trying to prevent human cases by educating the public on strategies that reduce mosquito breeding and the resulting human bites.

Individuals have the responsibility to protect themselves from mosquito bites by avoiding areas with high mosquito populations, wearing light-coloured clothing, including long sleeves, pants and hat, to cover exposed skin and using a mosquito repellent containing the appropriate amount of DEET.

To date our area has been fortunate to be a low risk area. We have been trapping and testing mosquitoes now for 10 years and have not identified any positive mosquito pools in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. Due to the nature of mosquitoes and WNV, we all need to take our responsibilities seriously. WNV is a preventable disease and can be easily done if we all work together to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and protect ourselves from being bitten by mosquitoes.

Protecting Yourself

- Protecting yourself and your family from mosquito bites is the best prevention.

During mosquito season (May to September for most of Canada), limit outdoor activities as much as possible between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are the most active. There are mosquito species that bite humans during the day, but these have not been known to carry the West Nile Virus.

Apply mosquito repellents to exposed skin sparingly. An effective repellent contains 20 – 30 % DEET. Products with more than 30% DEET may cause side effects, particularly in children. Children should wear a mosquito repellent with a 6 - 10% DEET concentration. DO NOT USE personal insect repellents on children under two years of age.

- Wear long pants and long sleeves, as well as shoes and socks when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear loose clothes made of tightly woven materials that keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies when outdoors.
- If you choose to use an insect spray in the patio and garden area, be sure to follow label directions carefully.
- If mosquitoes get into your home, you might find them resting on walls, under sinks, in closets or the basement. If you use a commercial insect spray, be sure to follow label instructions carefully.
- Citronella candles used outdoors around patios, picnic tables, and decks to repel mosquitoes are not very effective mosquito control options.
- Bug zappers (electrocutor traps) placed out of doors have not been proven effective in reducing or eliminating mosquito populations.
- Electronic “mosquito repellents” that emit high frequency sound do not repel mosquitoes.
- Claims that certain plants placed around a porch or deck will repel mosquitoes are not supported by scientifically based test results.
- Repair or replace old and torn screens in doors, windows, and vents that no longer prevent mosquitoes from entering your home. Repair any other possible access points into your home.

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