

Health Unit Media Release

July 29, 2013



Health Unit finds West Nile Virus in Local Mosquitoes

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit (LGLDHU) was informed this morning that a pool of mosquitoes in one of our traps in the town of Perth tested positive for the West Nile virus (WNV). This virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Each year between June and the end of September the LGLDHU collects and has mosquitoes tested from various sites from around our region for the presence of West Nile virus. This marks the first year, since 2003, that positive mosquitoes have been captured in one of our traps. Several other municipalities in Ontario have also detected the presence of WNV in their mosquito population this summer. The LGLDHU will increase mosquito monitoring and testing in the Perth area over the next few weeks.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark region is home to several different types of mosquitoes. The mosquito responsible for spreading the West Nile virus is commonly known as a container mosquito. It lives in warm, organic, sheltered standing water. It tends to feed primarily between dusk and dawn, and prefers to feed on birds, but occasionally will feed on humans.

The LGLDHU has investigated a few sporadic cases of West Nile virus among residents over the last few years. Most people that do become infected with the virus will have no symptoms. Some develop mild "flu-like" illness with fever, headache and body aches, and occasionally have a mild rash or swollen lymph glands. Fewer individuals, particularly those over 50 years of age, may have more serious illness with severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, nausea, and vomiting. People who think they have West Nile virus infection should contact their health care provider. So far this summer, there have been no reported human cases of West Nile virus in our region or in the province.

While, the risk of being exposed to the West Nile virus in our region remains low, the LGLDHU recommends the following actions to prevent mosquito bites:

- Remove standing water on your property that provides breeding areas for mosquitoes. Most mosquitoes do not travel large distances and thus those breeding within your space are most likely the ones who will bite you.
- 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.
- Cover up skin when outside, wear long sleeves shirts, pants, socks and foot wear.
- During mosquito season (May to September), limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are the most active.