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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2016 Mosquito-Borne Surveillance Begins in Winnebago County

Health Department offers tips to families on protection from mosquito-borne viruses

Winnebago County – Summer is around the corner and temperatures are heating up which may result in the amplification (increase) in mosquito-borne viruses in northern Illinois. Above normal temperatures can increase the rate of mosquito production, mosquito flight activity, and virus replication, thereby increasing the proportion of mosquitoes that can carry an increased risk of disease to humans.

Winnebago County Health officials want to remind residents that every summer there maybe the presence of mosquito-borne viruses such as West Nile Virus, St. Louis Encephalitis, Eastern and Western Equine Encephalitides, and California Encephalitides. We are also monitoring for the presence of new mosquito-borne viruses such as Zika. Taking precautions to protect yourself and your family reduces the risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

The best way to prevent mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – Reduce, Repel and Report.

REDUCE exposure

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles.

REPEL - When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.

REPORT – The Winnebago County Health Department has activated its annual phone line for residents to report the location of recently expired birds. The report line number to call is (815)720-4245. When calling the hotline to report dead birds, please leave the address, town, ZIP code, and number of dead birds found. Residents will also be able to report dead birds by visiting the West Nile Virus Program page on the WCHD website at www.wchd.org.

Every year during mosquito season, WCHD places several gravid traps throughout the county for collection of mosquitos for testing in addition to the dead bird collection from the hotline. These two assessments help the Department identify the presence of mosquito activity which in turn, provides notification and education to the public where the increased amplification of mosquito-borne viruses are occurring.

The Health Department also maintains several other informational resources for the public regarding mosquito borne viruses. The WCHD has added a new Personal Protection Index to the (West Nile Virus) WNV section of its website. This information will be updated as the conditions change and monitoring indicates the presence of illness. This will help notify residents when conditions suggest an increased risk of WNV, and can be found at www.wchd.org. Residents can also call the WCHD's West Nile Virus Information line at (815)720-4240 to hear the most up-to-date information. WCHD will keep the public informed on mosquito-borne illness by issuing news releases, posting updated information on WCHD's website and social media sites.

In the summer of 2015, Winnebago County Health Department received 299 calls and electronic reports from the general public with questions on West Nile virus and dead bird reports. Those calls resulted in 51 birds tested, with 6 being confirmed as positive. 150 mosquito pools were collected with 6 testing positive with WNV. No confirmed human cases with West Nile virus were reported.

For more information on mosquito borne viruses, visit the following websites:

Illinois Department of Public Health at www.idph.org

Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>

Winnebago County Health Department at www.wchd.org

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