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News Release

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West Nile Virus in Yakima County Resident and Horses

In recent weeks one resident and three horses in Yakima County have tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). Meanwhile, multiple mosquito samples collected by Yakima County Mosquito Control have tested positive for WNV. These occurrences were scattered throughout the county and regional reports indicate that WNV activity is also high in Grant, Benton and Franklin Counties. WNV is firmly established in south central Washington and will remain so until around the time of first freeze in the October or November.

WNV is spread by bites from mosquitoes that acquire the infection from biting infected birds (crows, ravens, magpies, hawks, eagles, robins and some others). About 80% of 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, tiredness, headache, body aches and rash. People experiencing such symptoms should seek health care and avoid mosquitoes to prevent spreading the infection. About 1 in 20 cases have a more severe illness with brain involvement. Symptoms of this form of WNV include severe headache, decreased level of consciousness, confusion, and other nervous system problems. This form of WNV appears to be more common in people over 60 years of age or with weak immune systems. It can be fatal and the nervous system problems can last for many months or even years afterward. 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 catching WNV, avoid being bitten by mosquitoes:

- 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 mosquitoes 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 WN virus infection.

More about mosquito repellants (<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html>):

- Use repellants that contains DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Follow label 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.

For more information on WNV and its prevention, visit:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/WestNileVirus>
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm