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Ohio Reports First Human West Nile Virus Case in 2018

ODH Urges Precautions to Prevent Mosquito-Borne Diseases

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reported today the state’s first human West Nile virus case in 2018, a 71-year-old Lake County man who required hospitalization.

So far this year, 20 Ohio counties have reported West Nile virus activity in mosquitoes collected and tested as part of statewide surveillance. Last year, ODH reported 34 human West Nile virus cases, including five deaths. In Ohio, diseases transmitted by infected mosquitoes most often occur from May through October.

“West Nile virus activity in mosquitoes is the highest Ohio has seen this early in the season since 2012 when we reported 122 human cases for the year,” said Sietske de Fijter, state epidemiologist and chief of the ODH Bureau of Infectious Diseases. “We are encouraging Ohioans to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites, including by eliminating potential breeding sites around their homes, in order to prevent mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile virus.”

The primary way people get West Nile virus is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who become infected with West Nile virus do not have any symptoms. About one in five people who become infected develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Less than 1 percent of infected people develop a serious neurologic illness, such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues). There are no medications to treat or vaccines to prevent West Nile virus infection.

Mosquitoes can live indoors and outdoors, and some types bite during the day while others bite at dusk and dawn. Here are some tips to avoid mosquito bites:

- Use EPA-registered repellents according to label instructions.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants and long socks when outdoors.
- Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with an EPA-registered repellent will give extra protection.
- Treat clothing and gear such as pants, boots, socks and tents with a product containing permethrin, or buy permethrin-treated clothing or gear. Do not apply permethrin directly to skin.
- Mosquito-proof your home:
 - Install or repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes outside.
 - Help reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home by emptying standing water on a regular basis from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires and birdbaths.

Learn more about mosquitoes and West Nile virus on the ODH website at www.odh.ohio.gov/wnv.