



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2015

### CONTACT:

Melaney Arnold – 217-558-0500

[melaney.arnold@illinois.gov](mailto:melaney.arnold@illinois.gov)

## First 2015 Human West Nile Virus Deaths in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed the first two human West Nile virus related deaths in Illinois for 2015. The Cook County Department of Public Health reported a resident in their 90’s became ill at the end of August and has died. Separately, the Kendall County Health Department reported a resident in their 70’s became ill at the end of July and has died.

“Although we’re getting closer to the end of summer, you still can be at risk of getting West Nile virus,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “It’s important for everyone to continue taking precautions like wearing insect repellent and staying indoors between dusk and dawn.”

IDPH reported the first human case of West Nile virus in Illinois this year on August 19, 2015. Last year there were 44 human cases, including four deaths. Cases in human are underreported.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 and immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile Virus.

Surveillance for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests on mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile virus-like symptoms. People who observe a sick or dying crow, blue jay, robin or other perching bird should contact their local health department, which will determine if the bird will be picked up for testing.

Remember to take some simple precautions to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and protect yourself from being bitten. Precautions include practicing the three “R’s” – reduce, repel, and report.

- **REDUCE** exposure: Minimize being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. If you go outside during these times, take precautions. Even if mosquito numbers seem low, it only takes one bite from an infected mosquito to transmit the virus.

-more-

Find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois](https://www.facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois) or follow us on Twitter @IDPH

Nationally Accredited by PHAB



- 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, such as old tires, buckets and other receptacles, or refresh the water in bird baths, flowerpots and wading pools every couple days.
- **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:** Report dead birds to your local health department. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government about areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

Additional information about West Nile virus can be found by logging onto [www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/west-nile-virus](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/west-nile-virus).

###