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CONTACT: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795
Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994
Donna Leusner (DOH) (609) 984-7160

NEW JERSEY CONTINUES EFFORTS TO FIGHT WEST NILE VIRUS; FIRST VIRUS-RELATED DEATH REPORTED

TRENTON (12/P101) – As the West Nile Virus season heads into its peak, state and local officials have stepped up efforts to combat the mosquito-borne virus with increased surveillance and control efforts. The number of West Nile Virus cases has increased to 15, including New Jersey's first death, an elderly Burlington County man.

“This is peak West Nile Virus season and, like the rest of the nation, high mosquito activity is contributing to the spread of the virus,” said Health Commissioner Mary E. O’Dowd. “Residents should protect themselves by using repellent, wearing long sleeves, long pants, and by removing standing water on their property that breeds mosquitoes.”

The Department of Environmental Protection spearheads statewide mosquito control efforts by providing funding, equipment and expertise to counties for the surveillance, testing and control of mosquito populations.

In response to heightened national concerns about West Nile Virus, the DEP is making additional funding available for testing of mosquitoes, Commissioner Bob Martin said, adding that the risk of transmission of mosquito-borne disease typically peaks in late summer and early fall.

“This additional funding will help the state and the counties even more precisely target mosquito control efforts,” Commissioner Martin said. “But it is equally important for people to take steps at home to protect themselves and their families. Just because Labor Day has come and gone does not mean the risk of disease transmitted by mosquitoes has come and gone.”

Robert Kent, Administrator of the DEP’s Office of Mosquito Control Coordination, urged the public to remove all standing water on their properties that can serve as mosquito breeding areas, use repellents when outdoors in areas with mosquitoes (those with the active ingredient DEET are most effective), and report mosquito activity to county mosquito agencies.

“Protect yourself and your family by remembering the three Rs – remove, repel and report,” Kent said.

If you have problems controlling mosquitoes, contact your county mosquito control agency by calling **888-666-5968**.

Tips for limiting mosquito exposure include:

- Maintaining screen doors and windows
- Using insect netting on infant carriers and strollers
- Limiting outdoor activity at dawn and dusk
- Cleaning and chlorinating swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers
- Using landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes will develop in any puddle that lasts more than four days
- Maintaining mechanical barriers, such as window and door screens, to prevent mosquitoes from entering buildings. Barriers over rain barrels or cistern and septic pipes will deny female mosquitoes the opportunity to lay eggs on water
- Ensuring that gutters are not clogged and are running freely

To date New Jersey has confirmed 15 cases of WNV from 12 counties including: Bergen (1), Burlington (1), Camden (1), Essex (2), Gloucester (1), Hudson (1), Mercer (1), Middlesex (1), Monmouth (1), Ocean (3), Passaic (1) and Salem (1).

The elderly Burlington County man who tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) died earlier this week. He developed fever, weakness and respiratory distress and was hospitalized on Aug. 26.

“Unfortunately the elderly and those with weakened immune systems are particularly at risk of developing serious health complications as a result of being bitten by a mosquito infected by WNV,” said Dr. Tina Tan, State Epidemiologist. “We are urging all residents, and especially those most at risk to protect themselves against mosquito bites.”

In 2010 there were 30 human cases of WNV in New Jersey, including two deaths. There were 7 human cases in 2011, with no fatalities.

For more information on WNV and prevention tips can be found on the Department of Health’s website: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/westnile> and the DEP website: www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito

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