

County of Centre



PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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April 10th, 2017

Dear Municipal Official:

On April 17th the 2017 Centre County West Nile Virus Surveillance and Control season will begin. West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito borne disease that produces severe neurological symptoms in about 1% of humans that become infected. The bite of a mosquito infected with WNV is the way in which humans acquire the disease. There are about 50 species of mosquitoes in Pennsylvania, and of these, 12 are capable of infecting humans with WNV.

The Surveillance and Control Program is managed by the County Planning & Community Development Office utilizing County employees, and is funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The program consists of trapping larval and adult mosquitoes in populated areas of the County and shipping them to PADEP in Harrisburg, where they are identified as to species, and the adults of species capable of transmitting WNV are tested for the virus. If a WNV positive mosquito is found, or large numbers of a species capable of infecting humans are found, County personnel are licensed to treat breeding areas with pesticides.

Additionally, we are responsible for collecting and submitting dead birds for WNV testing. If you receive inquiries from residents concerning dead birds and West Nile Virus, please refer them to our office. PADEP this year is limiting testing to crows, blue jays, hawks, and owls. PADEP will begin accepting dead birds for testing on May 1, 2017.

The state funding of the County WNV program requires us to focus on finding and treating WNV infected mosquito populations, and not function as a general nuisance mosquito spray program. However, if your municipality receives resident complaints, please direct them to our attention, so that we can trap mosquitoes in the affected area to test for WNV, and to evaluate the mosquito population level. If mosquito numbers are found to be unacceptably high, even of a non-WNV species, we are prepared to provide adult mosquito spraying at no cost.

In Centre County in 2016 there were 8 positive tests for WNV; 2 were from birds, 4 were from mosquitoes, and 2 were from horses. Across Pennsylvania, there were 1,479 positive tests on mosquitoes, birds, and horses. There were 16 human cases reported statewide, so reasonable precautions to safeguard human health should be observed.

Your municipality can assist the 2017 County program by urging residents to eliminate sources of standing water such as unused swimming pools, stagnant ornamental ponds, poorly functioning roof gutters, and especially used tires. Where it is feasible, poorly functioning storm water systems should be cleaned out to eliminate standing water. Please contact the County Planning & Community Development Office if you are aware of wet areas that are breeding large amounts of mosquitoes, so that samples can be trapped for identification and testing. If treating with pesticides is indicated, permission from landowners or responsible authorities will be obtained first.

Between now and the end of September, adult mosquito trapping will be periodically conducted in your municipality. All surveillance equipment will be labeled as to its purpose and will contain contact information for our office.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact the County Planning & Community Development Office. The Pennsylvania Department of Health Web Site www.westnile.state.pa.us contains more information, as well as up to date local and statewide surveillance results during the mosquito season.

Sincerely,



Robert Bloom

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