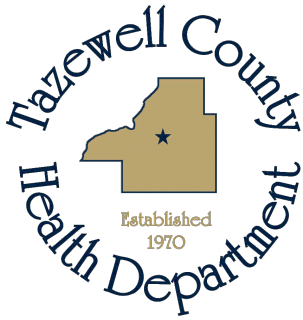


Media Release



Date: September 20, 2021
To: All Media
From: Tazewell County Health Department
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For Immediate Release

West Nile Virus Found in Tazewell County Bird

The Tazewell County Health Department (TCHD) is reporting the first West Nile virus in a bird for 2021. The bird was found in Morton in mid-September then tested.

“West Nile virus can cause serious illness in some people. It is important to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites, like wearing insect repellent and getting rid of stagnant water around your home,” said TCHD Environmental Health Director, Melissa Goetze. “It is important to remember that no matter what season it is, there is an ongoing risk of disease from a mosquito bite after it feeds on an infected bird.”

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a *Culex pipiens* mosquito, commonly called a house mosquito, which 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 even death, can occur. People older than 60 and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus.

Precautions to Fight the Bite include practicing the three “R’s” - reduce, repel, and report.

- **REDUCE** - 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. o Eliminate, or refresh each week, all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires, and any other containers.
- **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 locations where you see water sitting stagnant for more than a week such as roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes. The local health department or city government may be able to add larvicide to the water, which will kill any mosquito larvae.

TCHD tests mosquito pools throughout the county and dead birds from May 15 - October 15 each year for West Nile virus. Additional information about West Nile virus in Tazewell County can be found here:

<https://www.tazewellhealth.org/227/West-Nile>

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