News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Wyoming's First 2013 Human West Nile Virus Case Reported

An illness involving an adult female from Platte County has been reported to the Wyoming Department of Health as the state's first reported human West Nile virus (WNV) case for 2013.

"Wyoming's season for West Nile virus is not finished. It remains important for people to protect themselves from the mosquito bites that can spread the disease," said Emily Thorp, surveillance epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health.

Thorp noted a few of the states surrounding Wyoming have seen a handful of WNV cases and said activity nationally is significantly lower so far this year compared to 2012.

Most people infected with WNV never develop symptoms. Among those who become ill, symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph nodes. A very small percentage of infected persons develop West Nile neuroinvasive disease (i.e. meningitis or encephalitis) with symptoms such as severe headache, fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions and paralysis.

The Wyoming Public Health Laboratory offers free WNV testing for healthcare providers with suspected cases in their patients.

In Wyoming last year, seven human WNV cases were reported. Since WNV first appeared in Wyoming in 2002, the annual numbers of reported human cases have ranged from two with no deaths to 393 and nine deaths.

The "5 D's" of prevention include:

1) DAWN and 2) DUSK - Most mosquito species prefer to feed at dawn or dusk, so avoid spending time outside during these times.
3) DRESS - Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt outdoors or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light-colored and made of tightly woven materials.
4) DRAIN - Mosquitoes breed in shallow, stagnant water. Reduce the amount of standing water by draining and/or removing it.
5) DEET - Use an insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide). When using DEET, be sure to read and follow the label instructions. Other insect repellents such as Picaridin (KBR 3023) or oil of lemon eucalyptus can also be effective.

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