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West Nile Virus Detected in Kalamazoo County

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Health officials are advising residents to take precautions against mosquitoes following the detection of West Nile Virus in a deceased trumpeter swan in Kalamazoo County. To date, no human cases of the virus have been reported in the area.

“This finding serves as a reminder of why we must all remain vigilant in our mosquito bite prevention efforts,” said Lucus Pols, Environmental Health Division Manager for the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department. “Diseases like Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus are very real, making it essential to reduce our exposure to mosquito bites.”

Transmitted to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes, West Nile Virus is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While most infected with West Nile Virus may not show any symptoms, about one in five people develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and fatigue. In rare cases, West Nile Virus can lead to severe neurological complications and death, especially among older adults and individuals with weakened immune systems.

While there have been no positive West Nile Virus mosquito pools in Kalamazoo County to date, so far in 2024 Michigan has reported 140 positive West Nile Virus mosquito pools, an increase of 13% from 2023, reinforcing the importance of prevention measures, including the following:

- **Use Insect Repellents:** Apply Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and 2-undecanone. Read labels before applying.
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks treated with 0.5% permethrin to minimize skin exposure to mosquitoes.
- **Avoid Peak Mosquito Activity:** Mosquitoes are most active from around dusk to dawn, so try to limit outdoor activities during these times.
- **Eliminate Standing Water:** Drain and rid areas that hold water, such as plant pots, tires, clogged gutters, and bird baths. Standing water can serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- **Equip Screen Windows and Doors:** Ensure windows and doors are equipped with screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering indoor spaces.

The Environmental Health Division will continue mosquito surveillance and testing throughout Kalamazoo County until the end of September when mosquito populations tend to decline significantly. For more information about mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile Virus, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/mosquito-borne/default.html>.

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