

## **Prevention Best Advice for Protection from Mosquitoes, West Nile Virus**

*Wear Long Sleeves, Pants; Use Insect Repellant*

Submitted by: David Kehler, County Extension Director/Agriculture Agent

The end of the summer is always the peak time for mosquito activity and the recent rains and standing water will probably make the situation even worse. Mosquitoes act as the vector carrying the West Nile virus from avian reservoirs to other mammals, particularly humans and horses. About 80 percent of people who contract West Nile exhibit no symptoms and simply develop long-lasting immunity as a result of exposure. Many of these cases are unreported. The other 20 percent experience flu-like symptoms and may not be diagnosed with the virus.

According to the CDC, only one in 150 positive cases will develop into the neuro-invasive form of the virus that can lead to paralysis and death. Even that small chance is enough to warrant active preventive measures. No matter how low the chances are that you get it, as long as there is a chance, it's better to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes.”

Since human vaccines against West Nile are still being developed, the best way to prevent contracting the virus is to avoid mosquito bites. It is recommended to wear long sleeves and pants, as well as using a DEET-based insect repellent, especially at dawn and dusk or in areas where mosquito populations are high. “Usually about 30 percent DEET concentration is plenty, higher concentrations don't offer better protection. Read the label to see how often to reapply. People can also reduce the mosquito population by eliminating standing water around their home and property. Smaller containers of water, such as pet dishes or birdbaths, should be dumped once a week. Placing a few goldfish in water containers for livestock or horses prevents mosquitoes from breeding.

The end of the summer is typically the peak for human West Nile cases. Be aware and take necessary precautionary measures. While West Nile usually affects people age 50 and older, or people with weakened immune systems, it has been known to affect people of all ages. Just because you are young does not mean you are 100 percent bullet proof from West Nile. It is true that older people are more susceptible to it. But people from any age category have died from it. So it's best to be on the safe side, be aware of the risk and lower it to minimum.

### Controlling larvae in standing water

There's been plenty of standing water in which mosquito larvae can develop. Because the larvae develop in standing water, this can include:

- \* Eliminate breeding sites by dumping and removing containers in which water can collect.
- \* Apply a larvicide to larger standing bodies of water – e.g., drainage ditches and ponds.