



For Immediate Release: August 10, 2005

Contact: Gary Sky, Public Information Officer (303) 846-6245

West Nile Virus Case Confirmed in Arapahoe County

Tri-County Health Department has confirmed that a man in Arapahoe County has tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first confirmed case in Arapahoe County in 2005. The 48-year-old man lives in Littleton, but believes infected mosquitoes bit him while staying at his cabin in Park County. He was hospitalized but is now recuperating at home. Park County authorities have been trapping and testing mosquitoes in various locations, but none have tested positive for West Nile virus to date.

“For many people West Nile virus infection is not just a ‘mild’ illness. People should take protective measures to prevent infection from mosquito bites by wearing proper clothing, using insect repellent and eliminating any standing water around their property which could become mosquito breeding areas,” states Richard L. Vogt, MD, the Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department.

These recommended mosquito precautions include:

- Avoiding outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks
- Using mosquito repellents while outdoors
- Eliminating standing water in tires and containers around the house, as these can easily become mosquito-breeding sites

The West Nile virus is carried long distances by infected birds and then spread locally by mosquitoes that bite these birds. Infected mosquitoes can then bite and pass the virus to humans and animals, primarily birds and horses. House pets do not spread the illness.

All residents of areas where West Nile virus activity has been confirmed are at risk, but people over age 50 seem to be especially vulnerable to the most severe forms of disease. Most infections are mild and symptoms can include fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally includes skin rashes or swollen lymph nodes.

More severe symptoms may include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, muscle weakness or convulsions. Persons with these symptoms should seek medical attention immediately, because West Nile virus can cause paralysis, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and/or meningitis (inflammation of the brain's lining). In rare cases, it can be fatal.

Extensive information on West Nile virus in Colorado and numerous practical tips can be found at the website www.FightTheBiteColorado.com or by calling the West Nile Virus HelpLine at 1-877-462-2911.

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