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Tri-County Health Department Issues a West Nile Virus Warning in Adams and Arapahoe Counties

Tri-County Health Department is warning that mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are increasing in areas of Adams and Arapahoe Counties. This warning includes the communities of Aurora; Northglenn; Commerce City; Bennett; Foxfield, which is east of Centennial Airport; and in areas of unincorporated Adams County south of Henderson.

“We trap and test mosquitoes across the region weekly, and have seven mosquito traps that have tested positive for West Nile virus,” states Richard L. Vogt, MD, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. “Positive mosquitoes are a good indicator that we could see an increase in human cases, and it is a warning to people that they need to protect themselves from mosquito bites.”

To date, there has been one confirmed human case in Arapahoe County and no cases in Adams County. Currently, there are 18 total human cases in Colorado, with no deaths.

“These positive mosquito populations are in residential areas, so local residents are at risk. The vast majority of people who get West Nile virus are bitten by infected mosquitoes around their own home and community, not while on an outdoor adventure,” Vogt adds. “People need to reduce mosquito breeding areas around their home, and use insect repellent to protect themselves from mosquito bites.”

Recommended mosquito precautions include the five D’s:

- DRAIN all standing water around the house to eliminate any mosquito-breeding sites
- DRESS in long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks
- Use mosquito repellents that contain DEET while outdoors
- Avoid outdoor activities at DUSK and DAWN when mosquitoes are most active

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. House pets do not become ill if bitten and do not spread the illness, and there is no human-to-human transmission by someone who already has the virus.

Most infections are mild and symptoms can include fever, headache, body aches, skin rashes and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms usually appear 3 to 14 days after exposure. 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.

Signs of more severe illness 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 also cause paralysis, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and/or meningitis (inflammation of the brain's lining). In some cases, it can be fatal.

In addition to DEET, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have approved two new ingredients for use in insect repellents — picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus.

Extensive information on West Nile can be found at www.tchd.org and www.FightTheBiteColorado.com or by calling the toll-free Colorado HelpLine at 1-877-462-2911.

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