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**State Agencies Ask Floridians to Look
for West Nile Virus in the State**

TALLAHASSEE—With the recent confirmation of a dead crow in North Carolina testing positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), the Florida Departments of Health (DOH), Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) are asking Floridians to help determine if WNV is in our state, too.

Dead bird surveillance has proven to be an early indicator of WNV in other states. The public is encouraged to report dead bird sightings, especially crows via the Internet at <http://wld.fwc.state.fl.us/bird>. If people do not have access to the Internet, they can contact their local county health department or regional Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission office. So far, WNV has **not** been detected in people, horses, dead birds, sentinel chickens or live wild birds tested in Florida.

West Nile Virus can be transmitted to people when a mosquito bites an infected bird and then bites a person. WNV can cause flu-like symptoms such as headache, swollen glands and muscle aches, as well as a rash. WNV can cause mild disease in people, but in rare cases the virus may cause encephalitis and even death. People 50 years and older are more likely to be severely affected by West Nile Virus.

West Nile Virus was first discovered in the United States last summer (1999) in New York City. Since then, it has spread down the eastern seaboard as far south as North Carolina. While WNV has not yet been identified in Florida, migrating birds may bring the virus into our state.

Weekly summary reports for all WNV surveillance, including veterinary, avian and human, are posted on DOH's web site at <http://doh.state.fl.us>, click on "Epidemiology," then "Health Topics," "West Nile Virus." The public can report dead birds by using a link found on this site.

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