



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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*****MOSQUITO-BORNE VIRUS UPDATE*****

Human West Nile Virus Case Confirmed

Medical Alert Extended to Include Lake, Marion, Orange and Sumter Counties

TALLAHASSEE—The Florida Department of Health (DOH) announced today that the first human West Nile (WN) virus infection of 2002 in Florida has been confirmed. The patient is a resident of Sumter County, but had exposure to mosquitoes in Louisiana prior to illness. Due to the uncertainty regarding where the infection was acquired, and due to additional WN detections in animals, a medical alert is being issued for Lake, Marion, Orange and Sumter counties. Medical alerts were issued last week for Escambia and Volusia counties.

“Even though the risk of contracting West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne viruses by humans is low, people need to use protective measures to reduce their risk of getting the disease,” said DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A. He added, “It is important to take measures to guard against mosquito bites.” Agwunobi recommends the following:

- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are likely to be active and biting;
- If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, cover up by wearing shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt;
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET according to manufacturer’s directions; and
- Eliminate stagnant water in birdbaths and any other receptacles in which mosquitoes might breed.

The Department of Health laboratories provide testing services for physicians treating patients with clinical signs of mosquito-borne (arboviral) disease. These signs may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Physicians should submit serum and, if available, cerebrospinal fluid samples to either the Tampa or Jacksonville Department of Health laboratories. People over the age of 50 are at the greatest risk of having severe disease from an arbovirus infection.

DOH continues to conduct statewide surveillance for arboviruses, including WN, eastern equine encephalomyelitis (EEE) and St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE). Residents of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds by calling the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-800-871-9703, or via the Web site www.wld.fwc.state.fl.us/bird/.

For more information on West Nile virus, visit the DOH Bureau of Epidemiology’s West Nile virus Web site at www.doh.state.fl.us (click on Epidemiology, then Health Topics), or call the Bureau’s hotline at 1-888-880-5782 for recorded information.

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