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Media Contact:
Molly Payne-Hardin, desk 595-6410 or cell 791-1604

Health Alert

First 2008 Case of West Nile Virus in Escambia County

ESCAMBIA COUNTY (FL) – The Escambia County Health Department is issuing a Health Alert for West Nile virus following the report of the first adult case of West Nile Virus since 2006. Residents and visitors are urged to take the necessary precautions to avoid being bitten by an infected mosquito.

The 5Ds of Prevention

- **Dusk and Dawn:** Do not go outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood during the twilight hours of dusk and at dawn.
- **Dress:** Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- **DEET:** When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing DEET are recommended. Check labels before using a product on infants and children. If an infant is too young to wear repellent and must be outdoors, a parent should place mosquito netting over the infant's carrier. Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus are other repellent options for individuals who cannot wear DEET.
- **Drainage:** Check around your home to rid the area of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs. Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.
- **Screens:** Make sure window and door screens are in good condition, without any tears or holes that allow mosquitoes to enter your home. Place screens on open windows.

Eliminate Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

What is West Nile Virus?

- West Nile virus is a potentially serious illness – about one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness.
- The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.
- Mild Symptoms in Some: Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.
- No Symptoms in Most People: Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.