



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Caroline Calderone Baisley  
Director of Health  
Tel [203] 622-7836

or

Michael S. Long, Director  
Division of Environmental Services  
Tel. [203] 622-7838

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## West Nile Virus Update

On September 14, 2006 the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health announced an additional case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Stamford, bringing the total number of human cases to eight (8) in Connecticut this year. To date WNV has also been identified in residents from the following communities – New Haven (3), Bristol, Hamden, Stamford and Bridgeport. In addition, the virus has been isolated from mosquito pools in 19 towns throughout Connecticut, including Greenwich. The peak time for transmission of WNV to people is this time of year so the Greenwich Department of Health is urging residents to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

Because West Nile Virus has been isolated in mosquitoes in Greenwich, residents are advised to use insect repellents when outside, especially at dawn and dusk. Those repellents with DEET have been shown to be effective, however, manufacturer's instructions should be followed. In addition to applying insect repellents, long sleeves and pants should be worn when outdoors. With the recent rainfalls residential property should be checked for standing water, which can become a habitat for mosquito larvae. Screens on windows and doors should also be maintained.

The Agricultural Experiment Station will continue to monitor mosquitoes throughout the month of September and the Town's larvicide contractor will apply larvicide to the catch basins every 4 to 6 weeks. This preventive measure will help to control mosquito populations and limit the spread of WNV. Mosquitoes will remain active until the first frost.

Director of Health Caroline C. Baisley stated, "It is important to recognize that the highest risk of exposure to WNV-infected mosquitoes is during the months of August and September. The potential remains for people anywhere in the state to become exposed to WNV. Therefore, all residents must take measures to protect themselves from human biting mosquitoes and reduce mosquito breeding areas around their homes."

When bitten by an infected mosquito, most people are able to fight off the infection and experience either mild symptoms, such as headache and fever, or no symptoms at all. It is believed that approximately one in 100 persons bitten by an infected mosquito become ill. In a minority of infected persons, especially those over 50 years old, West Nile Virus can cause serious illness, including encephalitis and meningitis. Infection leads to death in 3 to 15 percent of persons with severe forms of the illness. The virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito, which becomes infected when it bites a bird carrying the virus. West Nile virus is not spread by person-to-person contact or directly from birds to people. Although there is no specific treatment or cure, the symptoms and complications of the disease can often be treated. Most people who become ill recover.

In some individuals, including the elderly and persons with compromised immune systems, WNV can cause serious illness that affects the central nervous system. At its most serious, it can cause permanent neurological damage and can be fatal. General symptoms occur suddenly between 5 - 15 days following the bite of an infected mosquito and range from a slight fever, headache, rash, swollen lymph nodes, nausea, malaise and eye pain, to the rapid onset of severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, disorientation, severe muscle weakness, gastrointestinal symptoms, coma or death. Residents are encouraged to see a physician immediately if they develop any of these sudden symptoms.

Precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- Avoid outdoor activities at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- If you plan to be outdoors for a long period of time, wear long sleeved shirts, long pants and use mosquito repellent according to the manufacturer's directions on the label (10% or less DEET for children and no more than 30% DEET for adults). Avoid application of repellents with DEET on infants and small children.
- Cover up arms and legs of children playing outdoors and cover playpens or carriages with mosquito netting.
- Don't camp overnight near stagnant or standing water where mosquitoes are most active.

Measures to reduce mosquito breeding around the home:

#### **YARD AND HOME CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Get rid of old tires, tin cans, buckets, drums, bottles or any water holding containers.
- ✓ Fill in or drain any low places (puddles, ruts) in yard.
- ✓ Keep rain gutters, drains, ditches and culverts clean of weeds and trash so water will drain properly.
- ✓ Cover trash containers to keep out rainwater.
- ✓ Repair leaky pipes and outside faucets.
- ✓ Empty plastic wading pools at least once a week and store indoors when not in use.
- ✓ Make sure your backyard pool is properly chlorinated every day.
- ✓ Fill in tree rot holes and hollow stumps that hold water with sand or concrete.
- ✓ Change the water in birdbaths and plant pots or drip trays at least once each week.
- ✓ Keep grass cut short and shrubbery well trimmed around the house so adult mosquitoes cannot hide.
- ✓ Eliminate collected water in boat or pool covers.
- ✓ Ponds and stagnant water bodies that do not support fish, frogs or other amphibians which eat mosquito larvae may be treated with a biological control agent such as *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (BTI).

For more information about the Town's larviciding program, personal protection and property management recommendations, the State of Connecticut mosquito management program, the following contact sites are available.

*The Town of Greenwich Mosquito Management Brochure is available throughout the community and on the Town's Website.*

Greenwich Department of Health	<a href="http://www.greenwichct.org">www.greenwichct.org</a>
Division of Environmental Services	(203) 622-7838
Greenwich Conservation Commission	(203) 622-6461
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection	
Communications Division	(860) 424-4100
DEP Mosquito Management Program Website	<a href="http://www.dep.state.ct.us/mosquito/index.asp">www.dep.state.ct.us/mosquito/index.asp</a>
Toll Free Mosquito Information Line	1-866-968-5463
Connecticut Department of Public Health	<a href="http://www.dph.state.ct.us">www.dph.state.ct.us</a>
Toxic Hazards Assessment Program	(860) 509-7742
Epidemiology Program	(860) 509-7994
Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station	(860) 974-8604
Website	<a href="http://www.caes.state.ct.us">www.caes.state.ct.us</a>
Department of Agriculture	(860) 713-2505
Website	<a href="http://www.state.ct.us/doag">www.state.ct.us/doag</a>
Westchester County Department of Health Information Line	(914) 813-5609
Website	<a href="http://www.co.westchester.ny.us/health">www.co.westchester.ny.us/health</a>