



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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High Mosquito Counts Identified in Kansas *Mosquitoes are Culex Species That Transmit West Nile Virus*

Topeka, Kan. – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has identified a high number of *Culex* species mosquitoes in traps located in Sedgwick County. This increase in the number of mosquitoes is likely to be statewide which could make West Nile virus transmission more likely to occur earlier than in previous years. The *Culex* species are known to transmit West Nile virus; they are not known to transmit Zika virus.

West Nile virus is most commonly spread to people through bites from infected mosquitoes, and it is not contagious from person to person. Symptoms range from a slight headache and low-grade fever to swelling of the brain or brain tissue and in rare cases, death. People who have had West Nile virus before are considered immune.

KDHE recommends the following precautions to protect against West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne diseases:

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an [EPA-registered active ingredient](#), including DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or use permethrin-treated items. Follow the directions on the packages.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn, but can bite at any hour. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at peak times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

Cases are most common in the late summer and early fall months. In 2012, there were 57 cases of West Nile virus in the state, the most cases since the virus first made its way into Kansas in 2002. More recently in 2015, 34 cases were identified in Kansas; more than half of these cases were hospitalized. In addition to tracking cases of human illnesses caused by West Nile virus, KDHE assesses the potential for West Nile virus by conducting limited mosquito surveillance, including laboratory testing.

Birds are not tested for West Nile virus in Kansas and KDHE will not be collecting information about dead birds. If you find a dead bird, KDHE recommends that you wear gloves, place the bird in a plastic bag, and dispose of it in the garbage.

Additional information about West Nile virus and preventing mosquito bites is available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/features/StopMosquitoes/>.

Information from KDHE about mosquito surveillance is available at:
http://www.kdheks.gov/epi/arboviral_disease.htm

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KDHE's mission is to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans.