

Panhandle

Public Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Panhandle mosquitoes test positive for West Nile virus

Mosquitoes collected from Panhandle trap sites in Scotts Bluff and Morrill Counties have recently tested positive for West Nile virus. These are the first confirmed positive mosquito pools of the season in the Panhandle. The results help Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) and other local health departments identify where the virus is present and where people may be more likely to encounter mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus.

Mosquito surveillance sites across Nebraska routinely trap and test mosquitoes throughout the summer. Human cases are also monitored as part of West Nile virus surveillance. Currently, fewer than five human cases of West Nile virus have been reported in Nebraska; exact numbers are suppressed because case counts are low.

West Nile virus is contracted through the bite of a mosquito. It begins with flu-like symptoms that can include a slight fever and headaches, though 8 out of 10 people never develop symptoms. Severe symptoms of West Nile can lead to encephalitis which can cause inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis. People with compromised immune systems are especially susceptible to this disease.

Prevention is the best to avoid getting diseases from mosquitoes. All Nebraska residents are encouraged to:

- Use insect repellent that has DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Use extra caution at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants, especially when out hiking and camping.
- Mosquitoes can breed in small pools of water, so frequently check your property for standing water and drain items such as kid wagons, bird baths, flowerpots, gutters, and tires.
- Even with the sudden change in weather, it is still advised to be cautious outdoors until there are consistently low overnight temperatures.



Dead birds are also a sign that West Nile virus is present in the area. Panhandle residents can now report dead birds online during the WNV season. Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/ycudv3tc> to report birds found on your property.

If you have any questions about West Nile virus, please call Megan Barhafer, Community Health Planner, at 308-765-1939 or mbarhafer@pphd.ne.gov. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.