

A positive test of West Nile Virus (WNV) for a resident living in southwest Nebraska has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). Confirmation came from lab testing by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

“It is important to take the necessary precautions to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes,” states Tami Herskowitz, surveillance nurse at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “West Nile Virus is not limited to the locations which have positive tested pools of mosquitoes or residents.”

Symptoms of WNV can vary:

- Most people, approximately 80 percent or four out of five who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.
- 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.
- A few people, about one in 150 people will develop severe illness. Severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

“West Nile Virus spreads when mosquitoes get the virus from infected birds and pass it on to other birds, animals and people,” states Herskowitz. “There is no vaccine, but there are simple steps you can take to avoid getting the virus.”

To avoid mosquito bites, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services recommends

- Applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus
- Wearing long-sleeved shirt, pants and socks
- Avoiding going out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active
- Eliminate standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites

More information on WNV may be found at our web site www.swhealth.ne.gov or call the McCook office at 308-345-4223.