

News Release:

British Columbia's First Avian Case of West Nile Virus

The BC Centre for Disease Control has been testing for the presence of West Nile virus (WNV) in dead crows, magpies, ravens and jays in British Columbia since 2003. This week, a dead crow tested positive for West Nile virus in the Central Okanagan. Although WNV infections were confirmed in humans, horses and mosquitoes in 2009 in the Southern Okanagan and the Fraser Valley, this is the first bird found to test positive for the virus in BC and it confirms the presence of West Nile virus in the Okanagan in 2010.

WNV is spread through the bites of infected mosquitoes. The risk of serious illness from WNV is low; however simple measures can help prevent mosquito bites and reduce the numbers of mosquitoes in an area:

- Individuals should apply insect repellents containing DEET (10% for children and up to 30% for adults), wear loose, light colored clothing when outdoors including long-sleeved pants and shirts and avoid mosquito-laden areas at dawn and dusk.
- Tight fitting screens should be installed on doors and windows
- Individuals should eliminate or regularly change any sources of stagnant water around their properties as mosquito larvae will develop in the smallest pool of water. Likely mosquito breeding grounds include the saucers under flower pots, wading pools, used tires, and clogged eaves troughs.

Mosquitoes become infected with WNV when they feed on infected birds, and the virus may be transmitted when an infected mosquito bites a human. Humans cannot get the virus directly from birds nor can humans pass this virus from one person to the next. About two out of every 10 people infected by a mosquito develop WNV symptoms such as fever, aches, nausea and vomiting. About 1 in 150 people infected with WNV develop more serious symptoms such as paralysis, extreme headache and, in rare cases, death. Although people of any age can become severely ill, the risk is highest for persons age 50 and over.

The City of Armstrong mosquito control contractor continues to work hard searching for mosquito larvae. When crews find the presence of certain species of mosquito larvae, the larvae are being treated with a bacterial pesticide that is safe for other insects, birds, animals and humans. Questions regarding mosquitoes or mosquito control can be directed to **BWP Consulting Inc.** at (250) 819-1750 or bwp@shaw.ca.

The Interior Health Authority and the BC Centre for Disease Control are continuing to monitor for the presence of the virus by collecting and testing mosquitoes and birds in some areas of the province. People can assist this effort by reporting sightings of dead crows, ravens, magpies or jays to the Interior Health Authority West Nile Virus Information Line at 1-866-300-0520.

For more information about WNV please visit the BC Centre for Disease Control website at www.bccdc.ca.