

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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St. Louis Encephalitis Virus Found in Mosquito Trap Site

A mosquito trap site in the Panhandle has recently tested positive for St. Louis encephalitis along with several more trap sites testing positive for West Nile virus.

While St. Louis encephalitis is endemic to Nebraska, outbreaks are rare and occur only periodically. St. Louis is similar to West Nile in symptoms and transmission. The virus is found in birds which can then be contracted by mosquitos and passed on to humans. Symptoms include fever, headache, stiff neck, disorientation, vomiting, and tiredness. Most people will not display symptoms, such as with West Nile. Severe symptoms such as encephalitis, or swelling of the brain, convulsions, and paralysis are rare and are most likely to occur in older adults or individuals with compromised immune systems.

There is no specific treatment for St. Louis encephalitis. Symptoms can start to develop in an individual 5 to 15 days after being bitten by a mosquito with the infection. Individuals who feel they might have symptoms of either St. Louis or West Nile should seek medical help immediately. Reducing your risk of contracting either virus can be done with proper prevention techniques such as:

- Use a mosquito repellent that contains DEET.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks.
- Take extra precautions when going outdoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Get rid of standing water.
- Add larvicides to animal drinking troughs.
- Keep window screens in good repair.

While the weather may be cooling down, mosquitoes are still prevalent until the first freeze occurs. Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) urges students and parents who might be enjoying football and cross country seasons to remember to wear mosquito repellent or wear the appropriate apparel when outside to help reduce the risk of the spread of West Nile virus or St. Louis encephalitis.

Please contact Melissa Cervantes, Environmental Health Coordinator with PPHD, with any concerns or questions involving St. Louis encephalitis or West Nile virus at 308-487-3600 ext. 108 or mcervantes@pphd.org.

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.