

# NEWS RELEASE

July 14, 2021

For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Melissa Haas*, 308-487-3600 ext. 108 or 866-701-7173

## **Panhandle mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus, DHHS confirms first positive mosquitoes in Nebraska**

A Panhandle mosquito trap site has recently collected mosquitoes positive with West Nile virus. These are the first confirmed positive mosquitoes in Nebraska. These positive mosquitoes give Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD), along with other health departments, an indicator of the location of the virus and where people may come into contact with mosquitoes carrying the virus.

Multiple locations across Nebraska are routinely monitoring sites to trap and test mosquitoes over the summer months. Human cases of West Nile are also used for surveillance. At this time, there have been no human cases of West Nile detected.

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.
- Be careful 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.

If you have any questions about West Nile virus, please call Melissa Haas at 308-487-3600 extension 108 or e-mail at [mhaas@pphd.org](mailto:mhaas@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.