

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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## **Panhandle Mosquitoes Test Positive for West Nile Virus**

Several Panhandle mosquito trap sites have recently tested positive for West Nile virus. These positive mosquitoes gives Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) an indicator of the location of the virus and the potential for it to be spread. Several counties in the Panhandle have been routinely testing sites to trap and monitor mosquitoes over the summer months. Human cases of West Nile are also used for monitoring.

West Nile virus is contracted through the bite of a mosquito. West Nile demonstrates 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 method to avoid contracting diseases from mosquitoes. PPHD always recommends using 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 also breed in small pools of water, so frequently check your property for standing water and drain items such as kid wagons, bird baths, flower pots, gutters, and tires.

The positive mosquito trap site indicates that PPHD is no longer accepting dead birds for testing. If you suspect you have a bird that has died of unknown origins related to West Nile, dispose of it by sealing it in a Ziploc bag and throw it away. Do not touch a bird with your bare hands, use gloves or an inverted bag to handle and dispose of. Birds can still be called in to PPHD to be reported to the state but will not be collected.

If you have any questions regarding birds or 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.