

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Panhandle Mosquitoes Test Positive for West Nile Virus

A Panhandle mosquito trap site has recently tested positive for West Nile virus as well as St. Louis encephalitis. These positive mosquitoes give 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. At this time, there have been no human cases of West Nile detected in the Panhandle.

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. St. Louis encephalitis is similar to West Nile in the onset of symptoms such as fever, headache, dizziness, and nausea. Some patients have reported mild symptoms while some may report serious conditions such as tremors, confusion, and central nervous system infections.

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, 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 St. Louise encephalitis or West Nile virus, please call Melissa Haas at 308-487-3600 extension 108 or e-mail at 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.