

STANDARD SAFE WORK PRACTICE – WEST NILE VIRUS

(created by Alden Barty Chapleau/Wawa Forestlands Safety Leader – December 4,2002)

What is the West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus is one of a variety of mosquito-borne viruses that can cause infection in humans and some species of animals.

How do people become infected with West Nile Virus?

People become infected by the bite of a mosquito infected with West Nile Virus, or rarely through blood transfusions or organ transplants from infected donors. There is no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted person to person, or animal to person.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually appear 5 – 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito.

What are the symptoms associated with a West Nile infection?

Most people who are infected with the virus have no symptoms. Others may experience mild infection, which may include fever, headache, body ache; a mild rash is common and/or swollen lymph glands. More severe infection (West Nile encephalitis and meningitis) include severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, confusion, loss of consciousness, muscle weakness, paralysis, and in rare cases, death.

How is it diagnosed?

In the human population blood or cerebrospinal fluid testing (fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord) can diagnose the virus.

Personal Protective Measures

If the West Nile Virus is found in your area:

- Minimize time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear light coloured clothing
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and long sleeve shirts when outdoors for an extended period of time or when mosquitoes are active.
- Apply mosquito repellent sparingly containing **DEET** (N.N-diethyl-m-toluamide) to exposed skin and to top of clothing when at risk of mosquito contact.
- Repellent use on people **over 12 years of age** containing 15% DEET will provide 5 hours of protection. Products with higher than 30% DEET may cause side effects, particularly in children.
- **Whenever you use repellent, carefully read and follow the manufacturer's directions.**
- Use mosquito netting where/when possible.

First Aid Treatment

Use repellent only in a well-ventilated area, and avoid inhaling spray. Do not use near food.

- If you get repellent in your eyes, rinse immediately with water. Do not use the repellent on open wounds, or if your skin is irritated or sunburned.
- Wash your skin with soap and water when you return indoors.

Wildlife Encounters

Deceased wild life should not be handled or transported by employees. Document the location of the wildlife and notify the proper authority.

Around Your Home

Adult females of some mosquito species will lay their eggs on the surface of standing/stagnant water. Take steps to prevent this on your property.

- Ensure the door and window screens do not have holes and that they fit tightly.
- Eliminate standing water in items like pool covers, flower pots, children toys, old tires, as they can be a source for mosquito breeding. Ensure pool water is circulating properly.
- Change water in the birdbaths at least twice a week.
- Clean vegetation and debris around the home and edges of ponds.
- Turn over plastic wading pool and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Ensure that your roof gutters are clean and flow properly.
- Cover rainwater barrels with mesh or screen and empty twice a week.