

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mosquitoes trapped near Clarkdale Test Positive for West Nile Virus

Prescott, AZ – Test results from mosquitoes trapped near Clarkdale on April 26th are positive for West Nile virus, according to Yavapai County Community Health Services (YCCHS). This is the first positive to be found in Yavapai County this year, and according to Arizona Department of Health Services it is the first in the state.

This early in the year, mosquito numbers are still relatively low, but the test results point out the importance of protecting oneself from biting mosquitoes.

“Our staff does trapping and surveillance throughout the county. The goal is to control the numbers of mosquitoes in populated areas, and to find the virus early enough to alert the public that they should take precautions” says Robert Resendes, the county’s Health Officer.

Brian Supalla, Program Manager at YCCHS for Public Health Protection, says mosquitoes in the greater Clarkdale-Cottonwood area tested positive in 2004 and 2005, but that last year was quiet. “The early positive should remind folks not to let their guard down” he says. The mosquito involved is *Culex erythrothorax*, a species with a relatively short flight range.

West Nile virus can spread to humans through infected mosquitoes, with symptoms typically lasting 3 to 6 days. Most people will feel no symptoms. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 20 percent will feel mild, flu-like symptoms that may include fever, headache, body aches, and muscle weakness. A smaller percentage of people infected with West Nile virus will experience severe symptoms requiring hospitalization, and the infection may lead to death.

Supalla offers the following recommendations to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes that may be carrying the virus:

- Avoid outdoor activities from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- When you must be outside during these hours, wear clothing that limits skin exposure.
- For additional protection, use mosquito repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.

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Our Mission: "Yavapai County Community Health Services will provide leadership, information, and services that contribute to improving the health and well-being of Yavapai County residents."

Also important is mosquito-proofing your home or business property by:

- Fixing or installing window and door screens
- Looking around twice a week for possible mosquito breeding places such as buckets, tires, pots, and canvas coverings – anything that can hold water can lead to problems

Resendes adds that there have been no local reports of human infections this year. "This is the purpose of surveillance – to look for disease, find the early signs – infected mosquitoes in this case – and bring our public health resources to bear". He asks the public to help by serving as neighborhood "scouts" and letting us know when there might be a problem, such as standing water, in their community.

Share this information with your friends and neighbors. Working together to eliminate or control mosquito breeding sites will make a difference. To report a problem or for more information, call the County Environmental Health office at 639-8138 in Cottonwood, or 771-3149 in Prescott. Other sources of information include the West Nile virus information line, 1-800-314-9243, and the website: www.westnileaz.com.

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