



Yakima Health District
1210 Ahtanum Ridge Drive
Union Gap, WA 98903
Phone (509) 575-4040
Fax (509) 575-7894

For Immediate Release	Contact: Yakima Health District
Date: July 17, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laura Charters, Environmental Health Specialist 509.249.6550• Marianne Patnode, Public Health Nurse 509.249.6509

West Nile Virus Confirmed in Yakima County Mosquitoes

July 17, 2008 (Yakima, WA)— The Yakima Health District (YHD) was notified Wednesday afternoon that mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile Virus have been identified in Yakima County. The pool of 50 mosquitoes was trapped near Grandview on July 7th by the Benton County Mosquito Control District as part of ongoing environmental surveillance for the disease. This is the first positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in the state this year. With mosquito season heating up alongside temperatures, residents of and visitors to Yakima County are reminded to stay vigilant against mosquitoes while enjoying summer life outdoors.

“We’ve had positive environmental samples in our county for the last four years. We know the virus remains active in our area, so the best way to protect ourselves from WNV infection remains to protect ourselves from mosquitoes,” says Laura Charters, Environmental Health Specialist with the Yakima Health District.

Since mosquitoes can breed in very small amounts of water in as little as one week, an important step in prevention is for the community to minimize mosquito breeding grounds. This is something everyone can do by eliminating standing water around their own homes, offices and property by:

- Emptying anything holding standing water – especially after rainfall or running sprinklers. Flower pots and dishes, buckets, trash cans, and outdoor toys are common places where water can pool.
- Empty and replace water in birdbaths, “kiddie” pools, pet dishes and animal troughs at least weekly.
- Fix leaks in outdoor faucets and sprinklers to prevent puddles of water.
- Check for clogged roof gutters. If clogged, remove debris so gutters drain properly.
- Dispose of used tires properly.

“Reducing mosquito breeding grounds is just the first step,” Charters adds. “It is essential that people also protect themselves from mosquito bites while outdoors.”

One way to prevent bites is to avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active: at dusk and dawn. If you have to be outside during these times, cover your skin by wearing long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks, and shoes. Mosquito repellants containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 are safe and effective ways to prevent bites in mosquito-infested areas but must always be used according to label instructions. Homeowners are also encouraged to screen doors and windows to keep mosquitoes out.

One in five people bitten by an infected mosquito will develop a mild illness that typically goes away without medical intervention within a few days. Symptoms of mild West Nile Virus illness include fever, headache, body aches, rash, and swollen lymph glands. A more serious form of WNV disease affects about 1 in 150 of the people who become ill. Symptoms of this more serious WNV illness include neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Anyone experiencing any of these symptoms should consult their medical provider, especially if there is a recent history of mosquito bites. The very young and the elderly are most susceptible to the more serious form of WNV illness.

As a reminder, owners are urged to vaccinate their horses against WNV. Previously-vaccinated animals also need yearly boosters. Even horses a few months old can be vaccinated against WNV. Please talk to your veterinarian about available equine WNV vaccines.

For more information on West Nile Virus visit the YHD Website at www.yakimapublichealth.org.

###