

West Nile Virus Detected in Dead Bird In Norfolk

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The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced today the identification of the first West Nile Virus (WNV) positive bird of 2008 in the Town of Norfolk. Confirmatory laboratory tests were completed at the State Laboratory Institute on August 15, 2008, for a Crow in Norfolk. The finding was not surprising, since WNV has been found this year in birds in other area towns, such as Dedham, Framingham, Natick and Needham. Additionally, WNV has been found in mosquito pools in Foxboro, Dedham, Westwood and Brookline. Last year, none of the birds submitted to the State Lab from Norfolk tested positive for WNV.

WNV was first identified in birds in Massachusetts in the summer of 2000. Last year there were 43 WNV-positive birds identified in the state, and more than 3,000 dead birds were reported.

West Nile Virus primarily affects birds. WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. **The Norfolk Board of Health and the MDPH reminds Norfolk residents to reduce their risk of West Nile Virus infection by considering the use of appropriate personal protective measures.** Personal protective measures can include avoiding outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants if you must be outside, and using DEET-containing mosquito repellents when outdoors during periods of high mosquito activity. When using repellents, follow the label instructions carefully, do not overuse and use appropriate low concentration products for children. **Repellents should not be used on infants.** Other protective measures include ensuring that household screens are intact and taking care to eliminate standing pools of water where mosquitoes can breed. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over 50 are at higher risk for severe infection. There is currently no evidence to suggest that birds, or any mammal found to have the disease, can transmit WNV directly to humans.

Some birds are very susceptible to the effects of WNV. Reports of dead birds are used by MDPH to track potential WNV activity in Massachusetts. Although, the State Laboratory Institute is not testing all dead birds, it is very important to track dead birds through reports from residents. Keeping track of dead birds helps to direct additional bird, mosquito, and human surveillance efforts. **Please continue to report all dead birds to MDPH at 1-866-MASS WNV (1-866-627-7968).**

Information about WNV and up-to-date reports of virus activity in mosquito, birds, and horses in Massachusetts during 2008 can be found on the MDPH WNV website at <http://westnile.ashtonweb.com/>. More information about WNV in the United States can be found at the following national websites: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> and http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/west_nile_virus/index.jsp