



**Public Health**

## **West Nile Virus Positive Mosquitoes Detected near Hermiston**

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For Immediate Release:

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West Nile Virus has been detected in a mosquito pool near Hermiston, Oregon Umatilla county officials said today. Testing at the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Corvallis, Oregon confirmed the virus.

“This is the first successful isolation of West Nile virus in live mosquitoes in Umatilla County,” said Ron Montgomery, manager of the West Umatilla

Vector Control District. Field tests conducted at the district lab yielded positive results. The mosquito sample was then delivered to Corvallis for final confirmation, according to Montgomery. “We have a good surveillance system in place and it worked exactly as expected” said Montgomery

The infected mosquitoes were collected near the Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge as part of the districts routine arbovirus surveillance program.

The detection of West Nile positive mosquitoes is not unexpected in light of 2 recent positive birds collected in Hermiston. He encouraged people to continue submitting dead birds for testing so the district can track the breath of spread of West Nile in Umatilla County.

Eastern Oregon has seen the majority of West Nile virus activity since its first detection in Oregon in 2004, said Emilio DeBess, Oregon’s Public Health Veterinarian. Union County, which borders Umatilla County, had declared a West Nile virus Emergency in August after multiple mosquito, animal, and human cases were confirmed.

“Oregon is currently reporting 13 human cases of West Nile virus, with 12 of those cases located in North East Counties. Other reports include horses, a dog and a squirrel” said DeBess

There have been no human or horse cases of West Nile Virus reported in Umatilla County this year. Last year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 69 confirmed human cases in Oregon as well as 996 human cases in Idaho.

“The risk of West Nile is low but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” said Genni Lehnert, Administrator of Umatilla County Public Health. She offered the following suggestions to reduce the risk of exposure to West Nile:

- Get rid of old tires and other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito infested areas.
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, making sure to follow the directions on the container.
- Screen doors and windows.

Because horses are also at risk for West Nile, Montgomery encourages horse owners to check with their veterinarians for vaccination. Veterinarians can arrange for testing of samples from horses suspected of infection with West Nile.

Since West Nile Virus was first discovered in New York in 1999, the West Umatilla Vector Control District, in conjunction with CDC and the Oregon Department of Human Services have tested over 150,000 mosquitoes collected in Umatilla County for the virus. Many local and state agencies as well as private volunteer groups are participating in the surveillance effort with the West Umatilla Vector Control District.

Local officials and health care providers in Umatilla County have been notified of the virus detection.

The State of Oregon has set up a West Nile Virus Hotline at 1 (800) 703-INFO. Additional information on West Nile is on the Web at:

Oregon Department of Human Services –  
<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/wnile/survey.shtml>

Umatilla County  
<http://www.co.umatilla.or.us>

West Umatilla Vector Control District  
<http://www.wuvcd.org>

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