



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **West Nile Virus Surveillance Activities Begin in North Dakota**

BISMARCK, N.D. – On June 1, 2010, the North Dakota Department of Health – in conjunction with several local, state, federal and private agencies – began coordination of West Nile virus surveillance activities, according to Michelle Feist, West Nile virus surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health.

Surveillance activities include reporting and testing sick horses, trapping and testing mosquitoes, monitoring illness in humans, and reporting and testing dead birds.

“West Nile virus is a serious illness,” Feist said. “It is important to determine the prevalence of the disease across the state so that people can take the appropriate measures to protect themselves.”

In 2009, one West Nile virus case in a human was reported to the Department of Health, with no deaths. In addition, West Nile infection was identified in one horse and two dogs. Since 2002, a total of 1,284 human cases of West Nile virus have been reported in North Dakota.

“Most people infected with West Nile virus experience no symptoms or have only mild symptoms such as fever and headaches,” Feist said. “More severe infection may result in high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, altered mental state and death. “The elderly are more likely to have severe infections, but anyone who develops severe symptoms should consult a physician.”

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The best protection against West Nile virus infection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. People are encouraged to take the following protective measures:

- Use insect repellents containing ingredients registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin – and apply according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (such as buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

Dead birds can be reported via the online dead-bird reporting form found at [www.ndhealth.gov/wnv](http://www.ndhealth.gov/wnv) or by calling the Department of Health at 800.472.2180. People who have questions about dead bird testing and reporting can contact their local public health unit, Indian Health Service sanitarian, extension agent, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the USDA Wildlife Services or the North Dakota Department of Health.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or visit [www.ndhealth.gov/wnv](http://www.ndhealth.gov/wnv).

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