



# Press Release

**Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department**

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## **Mosquitoes in Hamilton County Test Positive for West Nile Virus**

*Mosquito Season Still in Full Swing; County Residents Urged to Take Precautions*

Chattanooga, TN- A pool of mosquitoes in Hamilton County has tested positive for West Nile Virus, according to on-going mosquito surveillance conducted by the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. This is evidence that West Nile Virus is present in our community. The Health Department reminds everyone to protect themselves against mosquito bites and to remove potential mosquito habitats from their property. Mosquito season will continue through late October.

“Although we have had no reported human cases of West Nile Virus in Hamilton County, it’s more important than ever that people take steps to protect themselves,” said Bonnie Deakins, Director of Environmental Health Services at the Health Department.

The WNV positive mosquito pool came from Sector 5 which includes zip codes 37302, 37315, 37353 37363 (south of Interstate 75), 37412, 37421. Since the Health Department has confirmed the presence of West Nile Virus in sector 5, the Health Department will no longer be accepting birds from Sector 5 for WNV testing.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes with WNV get the virus from an infected bird, and are then capable of spreading WNV to humans. Most people who become infected by West Nile Virus will have no symptoms at all, but some will develop serious symptoms including high fever, headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, and paralysis. Milder cases of West Nile Virus often improve without medical treatment, but people with more severe cases usually need to go to the hospital for medical care.

The mosquito infection was detected in Hamilton County through the Health Department’s Mosquito Control’s surveillance program. The program operates a surveillance program that tests mosquitoes for West Nile Virus, and initiates control measures to reduce or eliminate the spread of infected mosquitoes. The Health Department fogs for mosquitoes throughout Hamilton County as necessary, and regularly inspects and treats about 300 areas with standing water.

“We routinely collect mosquitoes throughout the county and test them for infection,” said Bonnie Deakins. “With this evidence of West Nile Virus activity, we are encouraging residents of Hamilton County to remain diligent in applying repellent and eliminating standing water on their properties.”

Since mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water, individuals and businesses can help control the mosquitoes by eliminating breeding sites on their own property. Anything that collects standing water can become a breeding ground for the type of mosquitoes that transmit WNV, so it’s very important to empty or eliminate objects which hold water, especially after rainfall.

**Tips for reducing habitat and preparing the home:**

- Tip out barrels, buckets, wheelbarrows, and children's wading pools
- Change water in birdbaths and animal bowls at least once a week
- Get rid of used tires or drill holes in them for draining
- Clean garden ponds
- Recycle old bottles, buckets and cans
- Clean leaf-clogged gutters
- Empty water from flower pot dishes and saucers
- Dump water off of tarps and plastic sheeting
- Repair leaky outdoor faucets
- Cover rain barrels with mosquito screens.

**Tips to protect yourself and "Fight the Bite":**

- Reduce outdoor activity from dusk to dawn, the peak biting time for many species of mosquitoes.
- Use insect repellents that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (according to package instructions) Note: The CDC has recently approved repellents containing the ingredients IR3535.
- Wear protective clothing when working or playing outdoors such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks
- Keep windows and doors closed or cover them with screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

Hamilton County residents who want to report a dead crow or blue jay in areas other than Sector 5 should call Environmental Health Services at the Health Department at (423) 209-8110.

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