



DALLAS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Dallas County Health and Human Services Prepares Early for West Nile Virus

DALLAS (March 3, 2014) – Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) is preparing early for West Nile Virus (WNV) season and urging county residents to get ready as well. The county's WNV Prevention Campaign begins March 4.

"Typically, West Nile Virus season begins in May, but early preparations will be beneficial with prevention," said Zachary Thompson, DCHHS director. "Citizens can assist our efforts by being proactive at their homes and in their neighborhoods."

DCHHS has already posted information and downloadable materials on its website. Additionally, the county will begin deploying workers April 1 to set mosquito traps to collect, test and identify various locations throughout the county. Areas that test positive will be sprayed within 48 hours.

Director Thompson recommends citizens assess and evaluate their properties, and take care of areas where mosquitoes like to live and breed.

"It is imperative that citizens practice the '4Ds' in order to keep themselves and their loved ones safe from West Nile," Thompson said. "Personal responsibility is paramount."

County residents should do the following to defend against WNV:

- **DEET:** Use insect repellants that contain DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- **DRESS:** Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing outside especially during dusk and dawn hours.
- **DRAIN:** Remove all areas of standing water. Change water in wading pools, pet dishes and birdbaths several times a week.
- **DUSK & DAWN:** Stay indoors during dusk and dawn hours when mosquitoes are most active.

In 2013 there were 16 reported cases of West Nile virus infections in Dallas County, including two deaths, but no WNV-positive viremic blood donors were reported. Yet, DCHHS Medical Director/Health Authority Dr. Christopher Perkins stresses the importance of personal protection in 2014.

"West Nile season is often unpredictable due to several variables including mosquito activity and weather, so it's essential that citizens continue to utilize the 4D's," said Dr. Perkins. "In 2013 we saw a significant drop in cases due to citizen awareness and practice."

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WNV is only spread by the bite of an infected mosquito and can infect humans, birds and other animals. While some people experience no symptoms at all, WNV can cause flu-like symptoms in others. In rare cases it can affect the brain or spinal cord, cause encephalitis and can be fatal. There is no specific treatment for WNV, but anyone who thinks they may have WNV should see a doctor or health care provider as soon as possible.

“The fight against West Nile continues to be a joint effort,” Dr. Perkins added. “Everyone plays a role in making sure their homes and our communities are safe.”

DCHHS has information and useful materials about WNV on its website: www.dallascounty.org/westnilevirus.

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