



Ephrata Office County Courthouse
PO Box 37, Ephrata, WA 98823
509-754-6060

Moses Lake Office
1038 West Ivy Suite 1, Moses Lake, WA 98837
509-766-7960

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 05/11/2010	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
Grant County Media	Theresa Fuller, Public Information Officer 509-766-7960 x24

The Grant County Health District reminds residents that mosquito season has started and there is a continued threat of West Nile virus.

GRANT COUNTY – Spring is here and many Grant County residents are gardening, hiking and heading outdoors for fun. It’s also time to start thinking about West Nile virus prevention. In 2009 West Nile virus was detected in Grant County in one human, 11 horses and 10 mosquito samples. In Washington State West Nile virus was detected in 38 humans, 72 horses, 22 dead birds, one dog and 346 mosquito samples. Half of all the horses infected died or were euthanized. There is a vaccine for horses; contact a veterinarian for more details <http://agr.wa.gov/News/2010/10-07.aspx>.

The easiest and best way to avoid infection is to prevent mosquito bites. “A good early season strategy is to get rid of environments mosquitoes use for breeding” said Amber McCoy, Registered Sanitarian with the Environmental Health Division of the Grant County Health District. “Look for items around your home where water collects such as old tires and flower pots.”

Avoid mosquito bites

- Make sure windows and doors are “bug tight.” Repair or replace screens.
- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are the most active.
- Wear a long sleeve shirt, long pants and a hat when going into mosquito-infested areas, such as wetlands or woods.
- Use mosquito repellent when necessary. Read the label and carefully follow instructions. Take special care when using repellent on children.
- Mosquito repellents that contain the active ingredients DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus are the most effective for offering long-lasting protection against mosquito bites.

Don’t give mosquitoes a home

- Empty or throw away anything that holds standing water—bottles, cans, old tires, buckets, plastic covers, and toys.
- Change water in your birdbaths, fountains, wading pools, and animal troughs at least twice each week.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly; and clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall.
- Fix leaky outdoor faucets and sprinklers.

The virus is spread by infected mosquitoes. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito won't have any symptoms. Some may develop mild symptoms, such as fever or headache that go away without treatment. The virus is most dangerous for people with weak immune systems and those over 50. In some cases, people may develop meningitis or encephalitis; some neurological effects can be permanent.

The Grant County Health District has resumed its dead bird monitoring and are taking dead bird reports by phone or online at www.granthealth.org/westnilevirus.html.

More information about West Nile virus is available by calling the DOH West Nile virus information line, 1-866-78-VIRUS (1-866-788-4787). Updates are also posted on Twitter http://twitter.com/WA_DeptofHealth.

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