Mosquitoes in Franklin County Test Positive For West Nile; First in WA

Local News

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Olympia, WA - Mosquitoes collected near Mesa in Franklin County tested positive for West Nile virus on Wednesday — the first sign of the year that the virus is present in Washington. The state began monitoring and testing mosquitoes and dead birds around the state in June.

Although last year three Washington counties (Franklin, Grant, and Yakima) had mosquitoes that carried West Nile virus, no people in Washington are known to have become ill. Yet it’s important that people are aware that the virus is here and can cause very serious illness.

Avoiding mosquito bites can prevent infection. The best strategy to avoid bites is to use bug repellant and wear long pants, long sleeves, and a hat outdoors when mosquitoes are active. Get rid of standing water that collects around your home. Dump water in wading pools, tires, or old flower pots. Change water in pet dishes and bird baths at least twice a week. Make sure window and door screens can keep mosquitoes from getting in.

Most people bitten by a mosquito carrying the virus won’t become ill. Some may have mild symptoms including headache and fever that go away without treatment. For about one in every 150 people who are infected, the illness can be severe, even deadly.

Severe disease can include meningitis or encephalitis and some neurological effects of the disease may be permanent. People over 50 and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness.

Updated West Nile virus information is available online. People are encouraged to report dead birds, which can signal that the virus is in the area. The Department of Health website (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.