

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2013

First West Nile Virus Positive Bird of 2013 in McDonough County Reported

Macomb – The McDonough County Health Department (MCHD) is reporting the first West Nile virus positive bird tested from the county. To date, West Nile virus positive birds, mosquitoes and/or human cases have been reported in fifty-seven counties; two of the ten human cases have resulted in death.

Surveillance for West Nile virus in Illinois includes laboratory tests on mosquito batches, dead crows, blue jays, robins and other perching birds, as well as testing sick horses and humans with West Nile-like disease symptoms. People who observe a sick or dying crow, blue jay, robin or other perching bird should contact MCHD to determine if the bird can be picked up for testing.

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Common West Nile virus symptoms include fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches. Symptoms may last from a few days to a few weeks. However, four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. In rare cases, severe illness including meningitis or encephalitis, or even death, can occur. People older than 50 are at higher risk for severe illness from West Nile virus.

The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

- **REDUCE** exposure - avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dusk and dawn. Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night. Eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed, including flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles. Change water in bird baths weekly.
- **REPEL** - when outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.

Public health officials believe that a hot summer increases mosquito activity and the risk of disease from West Nile virus. For more information, or to report a dead bird, please contact Stefanie Johnson at the McDonough County Health Department Monday through Thursday from 7:30am to 5:00pm at 309-837-9951 ext. 220.