



# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

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## Health Officials Urge Precautions Against West Nile Virus

FAYETTEVILLE, NC - West Nile Virus has claimed the life of a Wayne County man and state health officials are urging residents statewide to take precautions.

West Nile has been reported in 48 states so far this summer, with 41 deaths attributed to it nationwide. The death in Wayne County is the first in North Carolina this year.

It is advisable that people throughout Cumberland County take the following precautions:

### **The easiest and best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.**

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing DEET. Follow the directions on the package.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flowerpots, buckets, and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in birdbaths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they are not being used.

### **Symptom of West Nile**

- **Serious Symptoms in a Few People.** About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.
- **Milder Symptoms in Some People.** Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks.
- **No Symptoms in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about four out of five) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms at all.

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## How West Nile Virus is spread

- **Infected Mosquitoes.** Most often, WNV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite.
- **Transfusions, Transplants, and Mother-to-Child.** In a very small number of cases, WNV also has been spread through blood transfusions, organ transplants, breastfeeding and even during pregnancy from mother to baby.
- **Not through touching.** WNV is not spread through casual contact such as touching or kissing a person with the virus.

For more information, you can contact Daniel Ortiz, Environmental Health Supervisor for the Cumberland County Department of Public Health, at (910) 433-3680.

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