



Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

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DHH confirms two West Nile cases in Ascension Parish

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 26, 2010**

GONZALES – The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has confirmed two human cases of West Nile virus in Ascension Parish.

Health officials characterize West Nile infections three ways: neuroinvasive, West Nile fever and asymptomatic. One case in Ascension Parish was reported as asymptomatic, while the other was reported as neuroinvasive.

A neuroinvasive illness is severe and typically results in a swelling of the brain or spinal cord. People with this illness are at risk of brain damage or death. Asymptomatic individuals were never ill and were only discovered to have the West Nile virus in their blood when blood work was done for some other reason, such as blood donation.

West Nile fever is less severe, with most people only suffering mild, flu-like symptoms. About 90 percent of all cases are asymptomatic, while about 10 percent will develop West Nile fever. Only a very small number of infected individuals will show the serious symptoms associated with the neuroinvasive disease.

Residents who are 65 years old and older are at higher risk for complications, but everyone is at risk for infection.

The cases were only the second and third reported in Louisiana this year after one was recorded earlier in East Baton Rouge Parish. These are the first cases of West Nile reported in Ascension Parish since 2006.

West Nile Virus is spread to humans through mosquito bites. DHH encourages people to take the following precautions to protect themselves:

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- If you will be outside, you should wear a mosquito repellent containing 20 - 30 percent DEET for adults and no more than 10 percent for children.
- Apply repellent on exposed skin and clothing. Do not apply under your clothes or on broken skin.
- To apply repellent to your face, spray on your hands and then rub on your face.
- Adults should always apply repellent to children.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors for long periods of time.
- Avoid perfumes and colognes when outdoors for extended periods of time.
- Make sure that your house has tight-fitting windows and doors, and that all screens are free of holes.

Residents can also help control the mosquito population by eliminating standing water around their home, which is where mosquitoes breed. Follow these tips:

- Dispose of tin cans, ceramic pots and other unnecessary containers that have accumulated on your property. Turn over wheelbarrows, plastic wading pools or buckets that could collect water.
- Drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers. Drainage holes that are located on the container sides collect enough water for mosquitoes to breed.
- Clean clogged roof gutters yearly. They are often overlooked, but can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens can become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended by a family that goes on vacation for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware that mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on swimming pool covers.

Information on West Nile virus cases can be found in DHH's weekly Louisiana Arbovirus Surveillance Summary on its Web site: www.dhh.louisiana.gov.

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