



# *Parish of Ascension*

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

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## **Fourth case of West Nile virus confirmed in Ascension Parish; officials advise precautions**

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GONZALES – The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has confirmed a fourth human case of West Nile Virus in Ascension Parish.

Ascension Parish Mosquito Control Director David Matassa said recent mosquito samples collected from around the parish tested positive for West Nile Virus. He is advising citizens to take necessary measures to protect themselves from mosquito bites and mosquito borne diseases.

Citizens should:

- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active, as much as possible; check to ensure that weather proofing is intact to keep mosquitoes out of homes;
- Eliminate water sources around homes and businesses which may serve as breeding sites for mosquitoes;
- Wear repellents with DEET or other approved ingredients when outdoors during times when mosquitoes are active.

Mosquito control personnel will continue to conduct disease surveillance activities and target areas with infected mosquitoes. Citizens are encouraged to call Ascension Parish Mosquito Control if they have mosquitoes biting around their homes, especially if the mosquitoes are biting during the day time.

Health officials characterize West Nile infections three ways: neuroinvasive, West Nile fever and asymptomatic. The latest case diagnosed in Ascension Parish falls into the category of West Nile fever.

Of the three earlier cases, two were 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.

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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.

**Citizens may contact the Ascension Parish Mosquito Control Office at (225) 621-9613.**

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](http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov).

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