

News



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 20, 2008

Connecticut Department of Public Health

Contact: William Gerrish

(860) 509-7270

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Contact: Dr. Theodore Andreadis

(203) 974-8510

State Reports First Mosquitoes Positive for West Nile Virus in Stonington

Hartford – The State Mosquito Management Program today announced that mosquitoes trapped in Stonington on June 11, 2008 have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). These are the first WNV-positive mosquitoes identified by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) this year.

“The isolation of WNV this early in the season from *Culex salinarius* warrants continued monitoring,” said Theodore G. Andreadis, Ph.D., Chief Medical Entomologist, CAES. “Based on past experience, WNV activity in mosquitoes will continue to increase through the summer and early fall. Fortunately, Connecticut has an extensive statewide mosquito monitoring program.”

Culex salinarius is a mosquito species abundant in coastal salt marshes that will feed on people and is one of the species that has been identified with WNV in Connecticut in prior years. In 2007, *Culex pipiens* mosquitoes trapped in Manchester on June 27 were the first in Connecticut to test positive for WNV. Overall, WNV in mosquitoes was identified in 18 towns.

As of June 9, 2008, human cases were reported in five states this season: Arizona, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. In addition, WNV activity in birds, animals or mosquitoes was identified in the following states: Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah. The WNV-positive mosquitoes collected in Stonington, Connecticut are the first findings in the northeastern United States this season.

“This is the tenth year that West Nile virus has been found in Connecticut. The recent announcement of WNV-positive mosquitoes in Stonington should be taken seriously,” said J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., Department of Public Health (DPH) Commissioner. “Residents, particularly the elderly, should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites during the mosquito season, especially in areas where WNV is identified.”

In 2007, four people were confirmed with WNV infection in Connecticut and included residents of Darien, Hartford, New Haven and Woodbridge. There were no fatalities. No human cases of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) were identified.

The CAES maintains a network of 91 mosquito-trapping stations in 72 municipalities throughout the state. Mosquito traps are set Monday – Thursday nights with trapping conducted at each site every ten days on a rotating basis. Mosquitoes are grouped (pooled) for testing according to species, collection site, and date. Each pool is tested for the presence of viruses of public health importance. Positive findings are reported to local health departments, in press releases and on the CAES web site.

Since 2000 there have been significant decreases in the numbers of dead bird sightings reported and those testing positive for WNV infection. Starting in 2006 and continuing during 2008, deaths of wild birds are not used to evaluate the risk of WNV. Monitoring and risk assessment for WNV emphasizes mosquito trapping and testing results. In addition, the DPH Laboratory provides testing for hospitalized patients with suspected WNV related illnesses.

Precautions to avoid mosquito bites include:

- Minimize time outdoors at dusk and dawn
- Be sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts. Clothing material should be tightly woven
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors
- Consider using mosquito repellent when it is necessary to be outdoors and always use them according to label instructions
- The most effective repellents contain DEET or Picaridin
- When using DEET use the lowest concentration effective for the time spent outdoors (for example, 6% lasts approximately 2 hours and 20% for 4 hours) and wash treated skin when returning indoors. Do not apply under clothing, to wounds or irritated skin, the hands of children, or to infants less than 2 months.

Measures to reduce mosquitoes around the home include:

- Dispose of water-holding containers, such as ceramic pots, used tires, tire swings
- Drill holes in the bottom of containers such as those used for recycling
- Clean clogged roof gutters
- Turn over objects that may trap water when not in use such as wading pools and wheelbarrows
- Change water in bird baths on a weekly basis
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, and when not in use, pool covers
- Use landscaping techniques to eliminate areas where water can collect on your property

Additional resources for information include:

- The Connecticut Mosquito Management Program Web site at www.ct.gov/mosquito
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov

###