



News Release

For immediate release: August 13, 2015

(15-153)

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West Nile virus death reported in man from Benton County

First death in Washington in 2015; high number of detections in mosquitoes and horses

OLYMPIA — The first person to die from West Nile virus in Washington this year was reported in a Benton County man who was in his 80s. He was hospitalized before his death and was likely exposed to the virus near his home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are currently conducting tests to confirm the infection.

Ten other people have been diagnosed with [West Nile virus](#) infection this year and one blood donor with no symptoms tested positive for the infection; the cases were exposed in Adams County (1), Benton County (8), Franklin County (1), and one multi-county exposure.

Year after year, south-central Washington has been a “hot spot” for the virus with the most in-state human and animal cases exposed in this area. [So far this year](#), a higher than average number of animal cases and infected mosquitoes have been identified in this region. Six horses have been confirmed as positive for West Nile virus in Adams, Benton, Franklin, and Yakima counties. Ninety-eight mosquito samples have tested positive in Benton, Franklin, Grant, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties.

While most testing of mosquitoes for the virus happens in the south-central part of the state, the species that transmit the virus are found throughout the state. Regardless of where you live or travel, you should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

A few simple precautions can help reduce your chances of being bitten by a mosquito:

- Stay indoors around dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, if possible.
- Use a mosquito repellent when spending time outdoors.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants outside when mosquitoes are most active.

- People who spend a lot of time outdoors working, hiking, fishing, or hunting should take precautions to avoid insect bites.
- Be sure that door and window screens are in good condition so that mosquitoes cannot get indoors.
- Reduce mosquito habitat around the home by dumping stagnant water out of old buckets, cans, flower pots, or old tires, and frequently changing water in birdbaths, pet dishes, and water troughs.

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease, and often dead birds are an early sign that the disease is active in an area. People may [report dead birds online](#) to public health officials.

Most people infected with West Nile virus will have no symptoms at all. Others may develop fever, headache, or body aches. For a small percentage of people, West Nile virus infection can be very serious, resulting in encephalitis, meningitis, or other complications. People with certain medical conditions that affect the immune system, such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension, or kidney disease are at greater risk for serious illness. Anyone with severe symptoms should contact a health care provider. More information is available on the agency's West Nile virus information line, 1-866-78-VIRUS (1-866-788-4787) and on the [West Nile virus website](#).

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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