



Yakima Health District
1210 Ahtanum Ridge Drive
Union Gap, WA 98903
Phone (509) 575-4040
Fax (509) 575-7894

For Immediate Release	Contact: Yakima Health District
Date: August 14, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gordon Kelly, Director of Environmental Health 509.249.6507

West Nile Virus Positive Mosquitoes Breach the Gap in Greater Yakima Area

August 14, 2008 (Yakima, WA)— The Yakima Health District (YHD) received word late Wednesday afternoon that mosquitoes trapped within the greater Yakima area have tested positive for West Nile Virus. The pool of *Culex pipiens* mosquitoes was collected north of the gap (Ahtanum Ridge) on August 6, 2008 by the Yakima Health District, in partnership with Mosquito Control District No.1. Three new mosquito pools trapped by the Benton County Mosquito Control District have also tested positive. This brings the year-to-date total for Yakima County to 8 positive mosquito pools and 3 positive horses.

“We’re seeing a greater number of environmental positives earlier in the mosquito season this year,” says Laura Charters, Environmental Health Specialist with the Yakima Health District. “We’re also seeing an increase in the number of complaints regarding mosquitoes from many parts of the county.”

The first line of defense against West Nile virus is to eliminate standing water that mosquitoes breed in. Anything that can hold water can become a mosquito breeding ground in less than a week, so people should check their property regularly, as well as change water in pet bowls, animal troughs and bird baths at least once weekly. The second step is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Screen windows and doors that remain open for ventilation. When possible, avoid being outside at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active. People should also cover their skin by wearing long pants, long-sleeved shirts, socks, and shoes. Mosquito repellants containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 are safe and effective against mosquitoes when used according to label instructions.

“We haven’t had any human cases yet, but 11 positive mosquito pools and horses in the span of one month definitely emphasizes the importance of continued prevention efforts across the Yakima Valley and region,” Charters adds.

Symptoms of mild West Nile Virus illness include fever, headache, body aches, rash, and swollen lymph glands. A more serious form of WNV disease produces symptoms such as neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Anyone experiencing any of these symptoms should consult their medical provider, especially if there is a recent history of mosquito bites. The very young and the elderly are most susceptible to the more serious form of WNV illness.

As a reminder, owners are urged to vaccinate their horses against WNV. Previously-vaccinated animals also need yearly boosters. Even horses a few months old can be vaccinated against WNV. Please talk to your veterinarian about available equine WNV vaccines.

For more information on West Nile Virus visit the YHD Website at www.yakimapublichealth.org.

###