



# News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Health Department Confirms First Human Case of West Nile Virus in Shelby County

MEMPHIS, TN – The Shelby County Health Department (SCHD), along with the Tennessee Department of Health, recently confirmed the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Shelby County.

The reported case is a forty-six year old male and the first human case confirmed in the state of Tennessee. To date, WNV has been detected in ZIP code 38107 within Shelby County. SCHD health officials urge residents to continue taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites and protecting themselves against WNV.

Eliminating the potential for standing water to accumulate around homes and businesses is one of the most effective ways to help reduce the mosquito burden. Through the winter months, Vector Control staff worked to eliminate any areas where standing water may accumulate. Between the months of November and April, staff picked up, and properly disposed of, 33,474 old tires (371.34 total tons), which provide ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Inspectors also continue to routinely identify, investigate and remediate ditches and other standing water reservoirs which prevent proper drainage.

Since April, and continuously until the first frost of the year, the SCHD Vector Control Program has treated areas within all ZIP codes by applying larvicides to standing bodies of water, actions consistent with its efforts to be proactive in decreasing the adult mosquito population. Larviciding is the practice of applying an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insecticide to areas where mosquito breeding has been confirmed and is the most effective way of eliminating mosquito populations.

As an additional precaution, SCHD continues to conduct scheduled truck-mounted sprayings of EPA-approved insecticides, weather permitting, in specific ZIP codes. Truck-mounted spraying only effectively kills adult mosquitoes currently flying at the time the insecticide is released.

“While the Vector Control Program works tirelessly year round to monitor and prevent the mosquito population throughout Shelby County, all residents are encouraged to remain attentive and protect themselves through the use of mosquito repellants; particularly those who are outside during dusk and nighttime hours,” said Helen Morrow, M.D., SCHD health officer. “Eliminating standing water around your home or business and actively wearing insect repellent will drastically reduce your exposure to mosquitoes, especially those potentially carrying West Nile virus.”

Mosquito populations are often at their peak between May and October. With no human vaccine for WNV, residents are strongly encouraged to be vigilant when controlling mosquito populations around their homes and businesses by doing the following:

- Wear DEET-containing mosquito repellants according to label directions
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Check properties for objects - including old tires, flower pots and drip plates, tin cans, buckets, and children’s toys - that collect rainwater and either drain or dispose of the water
- Do not use perfume, cologne or other scented products while outdoors, as fragrances may attract mosquitoes
- Install or repair windows and door screens
- Empty, clean and refill birdbaths and small wading pools weekly
- Empty and refill pets’ water bowls every few days
- Repair failed septic systems
- Repair leaky outside faucets
- Clean rain gutters and down spouts
- Secure swimming pool covers tightly and remove any standing water after rainfall
- Store wheelbarrows, canoes and boats upside down

- Stock ornamental lawn ponds with fish (*Gambusia*) that eat mosquito larvae (*Gambusia* fish are available FREE from the Vector Control Program. Please call for availability 901-222-9715)

In 2013, there were 24 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus statewide, nine of those in Shelby County. Three of the total confirmed cases ultimately resulted in death.

A copy of the 2013 WNV report, containing protective strategies, statistics and surveillance, can be found at <http://shelbycountyttn.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/17817>.