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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 2, 2018

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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.

At this time, WNV has been detected in mosquitoes throughout Shelby County using trap collections and state testing. Because of this, SCHD health officials urge residents to take extra precautions to prevent mosquito bites and protect themselves against WNV.

Due to the unseasonably warm winter temperatures, the SCHD Vector Control Program began treating areas within all ZIP codes by applying larvicides to standing bodies of water in February. These actions, which will continue until the first frost of the year, are 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 has already conducted scheduled truck-mounted sprayings of EPA-approved insecticides, weather permitting, throughout the county. Truck-mounted spraying only effectively kills adult mosquitoes currently flying at the time the insecticide is released.

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. 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.

Citizens are encouraged to practice the **4 D's**:

- **DEFEND** yourself by using insect repellent. Follow label instructions.
- **DRESS** in long sleeves and pants, loose and light colored clothing when outdoors.
- **DUSK/DAWN** stay indoors during this time to avoid mosquitoes when they are most active
- **DRAIN** standing water and install or repair window screens

Humans can catch the West Nile virus through being bitten by an infected mosquito. Although West Nile virus can occasionally cause severe disease, most human infections are mild, resulting in fever, headache and body aches that last only a few days. Symptoms of severe disease include a high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma or convulsions. Persons over age 50 and those with compromised immune systems are at higher risk of severe disease. They should especially be careful to avoid mosquito bites.

Mission

To promote, protect and improve the health and environment of all Shelby County residents.

814 Jefferson Avenue ♦ Memphis, TN 38105 ♦ 901 222-9000 ♦ www.shelbytnhealth.com

Follow @ShelbyTNHealth on all social media outlets for the most up-to-date schedules and cancelations of any mosquito control activities.

In 2017, there were twenty-nine confirmed human cases of West Nile virus statewide, eight of those in Shelby County. One of the total confirmed cases ultimately resulted in death.

A table containing WNV statistics for Shelby County dating back to 2002 can be found at <http://www.shelbytnhealth.com/233/Reports-Data-Tables>

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