



Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners

Health and Safety

Prepared: September 13, 2015

Issue: Public Health at the Cottage: West Nile Virus

Background to the Issue:

- West Nile Virus can cause severe neurological damage in the brain of humans and other animals.
- The virus is carried by mosquitoes and transmitted to a host when biting and sucking blood from that host.
- There are many kinds of mosquitoes and not all carry West Nile Virus. The main species known to carry the virus in Manitoba is *Culex tarsalis*.
- The virus cycles through wild bird populations such as crows, and has now spread throughout most of continental North America, since arriving in New York in 1999.

Cautionary Notes:

- Infection with this virus can cause permanent brain damage and even death.

What is current Policy or Program for this issue:

- Minimize your exposure to mosquito bites
 - Reduce time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn.
 - Wear light coloured, loose fitting, long-sleeved tops and long pants when outside, especially between dusk and dawn.
 - Apply appropriate insect repellent, according to Health Canada Guidelines and label instructions.
- Reduce mosquito numbers by reducing standing water.
 - Clean eaves troughs and empty birdbaths and any other items that might hold water.
 - Cover rain barrels with screening and tightly seal around downspout.
 - Clear yards of any items that might hold water.
- Change landscaping if necessary to prevent standing water around home and cut grass and trim trees.
- Dispose of dead birds by ensuring they are not touched with bare hands being careful not to scratch or puncture skin while handling the bird. Dispose in regular household trash and be sure to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Action Taken by MACO:

- Posting this issue paper to increase awareness and provide a resource on the MACO website

MACO's Recommendations for the Future:

- Look for information about West Nile Virus at Manitoba Health websites;
www.gov.mb.ca/health/wnv/
- <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/wave/2009/07/fight-bite.php>
- <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/a-z/wnv.php>
- Contact Manitoba Public Health by telephone - Health Links at 788-8200 in Winnipeg or toll free at 1-800-315-9257
- Remain cautious at all times when mosquitoes are present. The disease is here to stay.
- Seek medical help early if signs of severe persistent nervous system illness develops.
- Latest information available other sources can be found at the following website;
- <http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35956&posted=2015-09-04>

Position of MACO

- Take precautions when possible.
- Follow recommendations of health officials