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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST HUMAN WNV CASE

Health Officials Encourage Taking Precautions

Southwest District Health officials received confirmation of the first positive case of West Nile encephalitis in Idaho. The case is a male, in his 40's, hospitalized, and residing in Payette County.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a potentially serious illness that is usually spread to animals and humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. It does not spread from person-to-person. Most people infected with the illness, do not show symptoms, although more severe symptoms may occur. People with symptoms may experience fever, headaches, body aches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash typically occurring 2 to 14 days after the bite of an infected mosquito.

"About one in 150 people infected with WNV, develop severe illness, such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), as in this first positive case, or meningitis (inflammation of the linings of the brain and spinal cord)," said Jennifer Tripp, Program Manager for Southwest District Health. "These more severe infections are marked by a rapid onset of a high fever, headache, neck stiffness, body aches, disorientation, and tremors," she said.

Tripp advises everyone to be particularly cautious if outdoors between dusk and dawn as this is when the mosquitoes that carry WNV are most active. She suggests wearing light-colored clothing, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks. Other precautions include insuring you and your children are protected with mosquito repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient, such as DEET or Picaridin. Follow label directions, particularly as they apply to children under 12 years of age.

"Although there is no vaccine available for humans at this time, we encourage anyone experiencing these symptoms to consult with your medical provider and ask to be tested for West Nile. Usually WNV infections are more severe in people over the age of 50, and those who have underlying health conditions, but this case proves it can affect any age," she said.

For more information on WNV, visit SWDH's website at www.swdh.org; or visit Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/westnile.

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