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Half of Kansas Identified as High Risk for West Nile Virus

No cases at this time, residents encouraged to take preventative measures

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has issued a high-risk warning for West Nile virus infections (WNV) for northcentral, southcentral, and southwest Kansas. Northeast, southeast, and northwest Kansas are at moderate risk for WNV infections.

West Nile virus can be spread to people through mosquito bites, but it is not spread from person to person. About one in five people who are infected develop a fever and other symptoms. About one out of 150 infected people develop swelling of the brain or brain tissue, that in some cases, can result in death. There are no vaccines or medications to treat WNV. People who have had WNV before are considered immune.

“Know your risk and take action to prevent mosquito bites to protect yourself and your family against West Nile virus”, said Dr. Greg Lakin, State Health Officer.”

KDHE recommends the following prevention measures:

- Visit the KDHE WNV website weekly to learn about the current WNV risk level; http://www.kdheks.gov/epi/arboviral_disease.htm
- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient on skin and clothing, including DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Follow the directions on the package.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times, or consider staying indoors during these hours.

Protect and Improve the Health and Environment of all Kansans

- The elderly or those with a weakened immune system should consider limiting their exposure outside during dusk and dawn, when the *Culex* species mosquitos are most active.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.
- Horses can also be infected with WNV. Talk with your veterinarian about vaccinating your horse to protect them against WNV.

Most WNV infections occur in the late summer and early fall. Although there have been no cases of WNV reported to KDHE in 2018 there have been more than 600 cases of the most severe form of WNV and 30 deaths in Kansas from 1999-2017.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides this webpage with additional information about West Nile virus and preventing mosquito bites: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/StopMosquitoes/>. For questions about West Nile virus or other Arboviral diseases contact the KDHE Epidemiology hotline at 877-427-7317.

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