

West Nile Virus Risk Spreads In 2002

(NAPSA)—There's good and bad news about the West Nile virus—a mosquito-borne disease that can be fatal to humans, birds and other animals.

The good news is that by controlling swarms of mosquitoes, communities may be able to reduce their risk of exposure to the disease.

The bad news is that the virus is spreading across the U.S. faster than scientists had expected.



More than 20 species of mosquitoes carry West Nile in the U.S. Controlling the mosquito population is key to stopping the disease.

West Nile virus can cause West Nile encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain that can cause severe illness and death among those with compromised immune systems and the elderly.

Transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, the virus has been found in humans, birds and horses. There is currently no West Nile vaccine for humans, and in its first three years in the U.S., the virus killed at least 20 people.

Already Detected in 2002

Initially, the West Nile virus was detected by health officials only in mid-to-late summer. This year, health officials confirmed

the presence of the virus in birds and horses as early as February, indicating that the virus could be poised to spread much earlier than expected.

“The key to managing the spread of West Nile virus is for communities to have an integrated mosquito management program in place,” said Dr. Lyell Clarke, medical entomologist and president of Clarke Mosquito Control, a provider of mosquito control and surveillance services, products, equipment and education. “We are working with thousands of communities around the country to identify gaps in their mosquito control strategies, to increase their existing programs and to provide products and equipment to reduce overall mosquito numbers.” Many international experts agree.

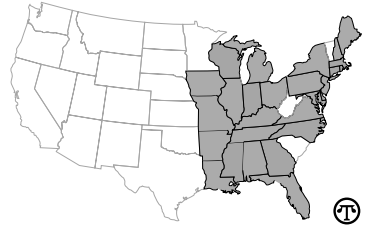
“With the disease beginning to spread across the nation, West Nile is most effectively handled through preventive measures,” said Dr. Norman Gratz, retired member of the World Health Organization. “Everyone was caught by surprise when West Nile was discovered in the U.S. in 1999. That should never happen again. Health officials across the country should and must be prepared.”

Protecting Yourself From West Nile Virus

The first step in protecting yourself from West Nile virus is to be informed. Listen to media reports if the virus is detected in the area, and ask about the current mosquito control programs in area communities—both for standard nuisance mosquitoes and in the event of a health threat.

Homeowners can help reduce

West Nile was detected in 27 states and D.C. in 2001.



mosquito populations by eliminating standing water and other common mosquito breeding grounds.

The following yard and home checklist can be used as a guide:

- Report any dead birds or birds acting strangely (disoriented, not moving) to the health department.
- Discard any containers around the yard that might hold standing water.
- Cover trash containers to keep out rainwater.
- Empty plastic wading pools at least once a week and store them indoors when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths and plant pots or drip trays at least once a week.

In addition, individuals can protect themselves from exposure to mosquito bites by remaining indoors at dusk and dawn, applying mosquito repellent according to label directions and wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors.

Free Brochure

For a free brochure on the West Nile virus, consumers can write to West Nile Brochure, Clarke Mosquito Control, 159 North Garden Avenue, Roselle, IL 60172 or e-mail clarke@clarkemosquito.com with your name and address.