



# MONROE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

1315 Jamie Lane Waterloo, IL 62298 Phone: 618-939-3871 Fax: 618-939-4459

August 18, 2025

## West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus (WNV) first emerged in the United States in the New York metropolitan area in the fall of 1999. Since then, the virus, which can be transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito, has quickly spread across the country and reached the West Coast.

The Monroe County Health Department continues to collect and test mosquitos for the presence of West Nile Virus. On August 18, 2025, the department reported the first positive mosquito pool of the season. The discovery of WNV positive mosquito pools is not a surprise and should not alarm the public. However, individuals should become aware and take proper precautions for protection.

The best way to prevent West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and neighborhood and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The following are precautions to help control mosquito-breeding areas and reduce the risk of mosquito-borne disease:

- Remove or empty water in old tires, tin cans, buckets, drums, bottles or other places where mosquitoes might breed.
- Clean rain gutters and downspouts.
- Empty plastic wading pools at least once a week and store indoors when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths and plant pots or drip trays at least once a week.
- Store boats covered or upside down, or remove rainwater weekly.
- Empty your pet's water bowl daily.
- Level the ground around your home so water can run off and not collect in low spots. Fill in holes or depressions near your home that accumulate water.

- Keep weeds and tall grass cut short; adult mosquitoes look for these shady places to rest during the hot daylight hours.
- Maintain aeration unit discharges to prevent stagnant water.

Additionally, people can provide personal protection from mosquitoes by several methods including:

- Avoid places and times when mosquitoes bite. Generally, the peak biting periods occur at dawn and dusk.
- Be sure door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair.
- Wear appropriate clothing. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants made of tightly woven materials keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies.
- Check to see that your mosquito repellent contains DEET, a chemical commonly found in these products. Generally, repellents containing about 25-30 percent DEET work best for adults; use lower concentrations for children. When outdoors, apply repellent sparingly to exposed skin or clothing, as indicated on the product's label.

Chemical control of the mosquito population is limited. Fogging the streets and parks is only a **temporary control** since this method kills only the adult population. Mosquitoes can grow from egg to adult in less than 10 days. Larvicides are available to control the reproduction process, thus eliminating the adult mosquito, and these may be safely used in residential areas for a longer-term control technique (usually 30 days).

The Culex or house mosquito, which can carry West Nile Virus or St. Louis encephalitis, breeds in warm, stagnant water and begins to increase in numbers early in the summer. Warmer temperatures and rains are ideal for the rapid development and activity of the Culex mosquito and, as a result, an increase in West Nile Virus activity.

While most people infected with the West Nile Virus have no symptoms or illness, some may become ill, usually 3 – 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. When people do become ill, symptoms may be

mild, such as a fever, headache and body aches. In some individuals, however, particularly persons 50 years of age and older, the risk of severe disease is higher. These individuals may experience headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis and rarely death.

For additional information, you may contact the Environmental Health Division at (618) 939-3871.