



# WEST NILE VIRUS

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Edward G. Rendell, Governor  
Dennis C Wolff, Secretary

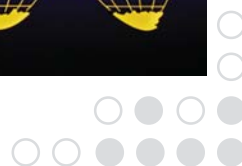


## Background

# I n f o r m a t i o n



West Nile Virus (WNV) was first found in the United States in 1999. The virus was previously found only in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It was probably introduced into this country by an infected bird or mosquito. Since 1999, it has spread across the U.S. and parts of Canada. West Nile Virus can cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, in susceptible animals and people.



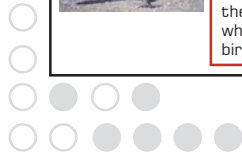
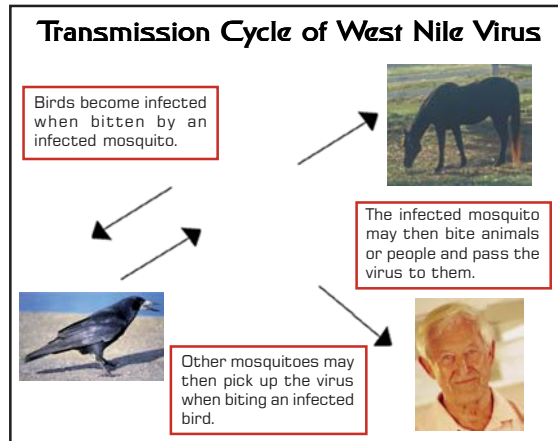
How is

## West Nile Virus Spread?



mosquito infected with WNV may infect a bird when taking a blood meal from that bird. Other mosquitoes can then pick up the virus from the infected bird.

Other animals and people can become infected when bitten by a mosquito that is carrying the virus.





## What animals are most at Risk?

**B**irds and horses seem to be most likely to develop illness from WNV infection. Crows are especially susceptible, and most crows that are infected become sick and die. Not all horses that become infected actually get sick. In horses that do become ill, symptoms can range from mild depression and lethargy to signs of severe neurologic disease (weakness, twitching, paralysis). WNV has been diagnosed in other species of animals, including cattle, dogs, and cats. Most of these animals did not show severe signs of illness after infection. Animals that do become ill may show signs of encephalitis, similar to horses. If you have questions concerning WNV in animals, or testing for animals, contact your veterinarian or the PA Department of Agriculture.



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## TREATMENT



Supportive and symptomatic veterinary care of animals showing illness is often helpful. Many animals showing symptoms do recover with treatment after illness. Products containing antibodies are now available for treating horses that develop symptoms following infection with WNV. Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about treatment.

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## PREVENTION



A vaccine for horses is available through veterinarians. Vaccination of horses against EEE, WEE, and VEE does not protect them from being infected with WNV. Although a vaccine for WNV is available, it is important to reduce the chance of exposure to the virus. This means reduction of mosquitoes and their breeding sites by reducing the amount of standing water on your property. If you need help evaluating your property, contact your county DEP office.

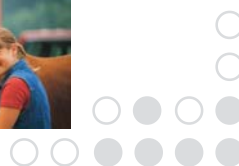




## West Nile Virus

# Control Program

**T**he Department of Agriculture is cooperating with the Departments of Environmental Protection and Health to find mosquitoes that may spread the virus in PA. WNV has been declared a reportable disease. If a positive horse or other animal is identified, the Department of Environmental Protection may contact the owner to schedule a visit, so that they can help the owner evaluate the farm or home property for mosquitoes and mosquito breeding areas. Control measures may be carried out if it is necessary to reduce the risk. This risk analysis and mosquito control is free and may help prevent additional cases of WNV. For more information, visit Pennsylvania's WNV website at [www.westnile.state.pa.us](http://www.westnile.state.pa.us). Call your local DEP office if you have questions.



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## T e s t i n g



West Nile Virus cannot be diagnosed in a live animal without a blood test. It is important to identify infected animals, since they indicate that mosquitoes carrying the virus are in the area. Steps can then be taken to reduce the number of mosquitoes. For more information, ask your veterinarian or call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

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## West Nile Virus in People



West Nile Virus generally does not cause severe illness in healthy people. Many people that are bitten by an infected mosquito do not become ill. Many of those infected that do become ill show signs of a mild, flu-like illness. Others may develop more severe symptoms. Call the Department of Health or your physician for more information about the disease and how to reduce your risk of infection.





**PENNSYLVANIA**  
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**For More West Nile Virus Information:**

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Dr. Nan Hanshaw Roberts, West Nile Virus Coordinator  
Phone - 717.783.6897  
Hours - 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory  
Phone - 717.787.8808  
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Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
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