



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

What Tire Pile Owners Should Know About West Nile Virus

For more information, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH

What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, a brain inflammation. Infected mosquitoes pass the virus onto birds, animals and people. In 1999 WNV first appeared in New York and then spread into Pennsylvania in 2000. WNV can now be found in all 48 contiguous states. In Pennsylvania, cases of WNV usually occur in the mid-summer or early fall, although mosquito season is usually April-October.

The principal route of human infection with West Nile virus is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Other methods of transmission, which represent a very small percentage of cases; include blood transfusion, organ transplantation, and mother-to-child (ingestion of breast milk and transplacental.)

Who is most at risk?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), all residents of areas where virus activity has been identified are at risk of getting West Nile virus; persons over 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

What are the symptoms?

People with mild infections may experience fever, headaches, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headaches, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, occasional convulsions, and paralysis. If you have any of these symptoms contact your family physician.

Is there treatment?

There is no specific treatment for West Nile virus infection. While most people fully recover from the virus, in some severe cases hospitalization may be needed.

What is Pennsylvania doing to prevent mosquito production?

A multi-agency effort led by the State Departments of Health, Environmental Protection, and Agriculture has created a comprehensive, statewide plan to try to limit the impact of virus outbreak in the Commonwealth.

One of the main objectives of the program is to reduce potential mosquito production across the State. Eliminating places for mosquitoes to live is an important part of an integrated pest management program, and whenever possible is the preferred solution to mosquito control. When source reduction is not possible larval and adult mosquito control is conducted.

Could my tire pile be a mosquito-production site?

Tire piles could provide suitable areas for mosquitoes to live, including those known to carry West Nile virus. When discarded tires are allowed to accumulate even a small amount of water, they become attractive sites for mosquitoes to lay their eggs. For example, during the course of one season, thousands of mosquitoes can emerge from just one tire. If tires infested with mosquito eggs, larvae or pupae are transported, the potential to spread mosquito populations increases. This is one of the theories on how WNV was introduced into the U.S.

How can I prevent mosquitoes from breeding?

If a tire pile exists on your property, it is your responsibility to make sure that it does not create a nuisance or health hazard. There are a number of ways to eliminate mosquito production in tire piles.

Standing water in the tires should be eliminated. This can be accomplished by properly storing tires under a tarp or other cover, removing the side wall, or drilling holes in the back of the tire.

In situations where eliminating mosquito production areas is not a practical alternative, larviciding is the most effective control technique. For treatment options, contact your county WNV coordinator. Your coordinator can help you determine what control techniques would best suit your situation, and what type of control activities should be conducted.

If you are concerned about a tire pile in your area, contact the owner of the site or the local officials to find out what mosquito-control measures are being taken.

How can I protect myself?

It is not necessary to limit any outdoor activities, unless local officials advise you otherwise.

However, you can and should try to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. In addition to reducing stagnant water in your yard, make sure all windows and doors have screens, and that all screens are in good repair. If West Nile virus is found in your area:

- Take normal steps to prevent insect bites.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active.
- Consider the use of mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors. Wash all treated skin and clothing when returning indoors.

Remember, electromagnetic devices, ultrasound devices and Vitamin B are not effective in preventing mosquito bites.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the West Nile website at www.westnile.state.pa.us, or call 1-877-PA-

HEALTH (72-432584) or contact DEP at the appropriate regional office below.

DEP Regional Offices

Southeast Regional Office
Water Supply Management – 484-250-5113
Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia

Northeast Regional Office
Water Supply Management – 610-861-2070
Counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming

Southcentral Regional Office
Water Supply Management – 717-705-4708
Counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, York

Northcentral Regional Office
Water Management – 570-327-3417
Counties: Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union

Southwest Regional Office
Water Supply Management – 412-442-4301
Counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland

Northwest Regional Office
Water Management – 814-332-6942
Counties: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, Warren

For more information, visit DEP's website at www.state.pa.us, Keyword: "DEP West Nile."