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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

## **Mosquito prevention can protect against West Nile Virus**

As the wet spring turns into a wet and warm summer, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department reminds local residents that they can take a few simple steps to prevent the mosquito population growth and to protect themselves from mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes are capable of transmitting diseases such as West Nile Virus (WNV), which can cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea or vomiting. Less than 1 percent of mosquitoes are infected with WNV, however.

Most people who get WNV do not develop symptoms. If they do, symptoms can last for as short as a few days, though even healthy people have become sick for several weeks. Severe cases can result in death. Last summer saw the highest number of West Nile Virus cases in the United States since the disease was first detected in this country in 1999, with more than 5,600 confirmed cases and 286 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. There is currently no vaccine to prevent the disease. Texas and Oklahoma were especially hard hit last year, with more than 1,800 cases in Texas alone.

To reduce the mosquito population:

- Eliminate mosquito habitats in yards by removing standing water; a mosquito can breed in as little as one teaspoon of standing water
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes daily
- Dispose of old tires, cans, wading pools or any other items that collect water
- Make sure roof gutters are draining properly
- Use mosquito-eliminating products according to product labels in standing water, like ponds

To avoid mosquito bites:

- Use EPA-registered mosquito repellents when necessary and follow label directions and precautions closely.
- Stay indoors at sunrise, sunset and early in the evening when mosquitoes are most active, especially if there is a mosquito-borne disease warning in effect.
- Tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks to cover gaps in your clothing where mosquitoes can get to your skin.
- Replace your outdoor lights with yellow "bug" lights, which tend to attract fewer mosquitoes than ordinary lights. The yellow lights are not repellents, however.
- Cover all gaps in walls, doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering
- Make sure window and door screens are "bug tight"

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department works to protect the health of Springfield residents by:

- Advising property owners on how to respond to specific mosquito problems
- Educating individuals on how to protect against mosquito bites
- Investigating complaints of standing water on public land
- If mosquito larvae are found on public land, the area is treated with mosquito larvicide. Larvicide kills mosquitoes before they have the opportunity to reach adulthood.

Health Department staff responds with these services only to areas where a request has been made, and there are no general "fogging" or other mass insecticide programs within the City of Springfield or Greene County. To reach the department's environmental services staff about mosquitoes, call (417) 864-1017.

"Mosquito prevention is largely the responsibility of property owners and private citizens in our community," said Karen Prescott, Environmental Health Administrator with the health department. "In general, they are more of an annoyance than a threat to human health, but there are some risks in play so we ask citizens to do their part."

More information:

- Mosquito Control information: <http://health.springfieldmo.gov/mosquito>
- West Nile Virus information: <http://health.springfieldmo.gov/westnile>
- American Mosquito Control Association: [www.mosquito.org](http://www.mosquito.org)

Media contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205.