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\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

### **First West Nile Virus-Positive Horses this Year Identified in Platte and Fremont Counties**

CHEYENNE - Terry Creekmore, the West Nile Virus Surveillance Coordinator for the Wyoming Department of Health, said today that a horse in Platte County and another in Fremont County have been identified as the first animals positive for West Nile virus this season. No humans have tested positive in Wyoming thus far.

Creekmore said that to date this year, 36 birds and 15 horses have been tested at the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory. Last year, officials from the Veterinary Laboratory tested 163 horses and 303 dead birds for WNV with the first positive bird identified on June 17 and the first positive horse identified on June 15.

Creekmore said that it is still too early to tell what kind of season we will have for WNV as transmission in mosquitoes is highly dependent upon temperature. He said that the summer of 2004 was unusually cool and contributed to the lower number of human and horse cases reported in the state, however, if temperatures during this summer are near or above normal then increased WNV transmission can be expected.

Wyoming Department of Health officials are currently soliciting dead birds for testing for WNV and will continue to do so until the end of October. Those finding raptors such as hawks, owls, or eagles should contact the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to arrange for carcass transport and testing.

People who find a dead bird on their property should not send it to state or local health agencies but call the health department's West Nile virus toll-free number at 1-877-WYO-BITE for instructions. They will be asked to provide the following information: name, phone number, bird species, number dead, address where the bird was found, and approximate date of death. If the bird(s) are suitable for testing people will be advised on how to handle and submit the carcass. Not every bird that is submitted will be tested. Reasons include bird is too decomposed, excessive birds have already been submitted from the area, bird is wrong species, etc. Results are usually available within 1 week. Persons will be notified ONLY IF the bird is positive.

People with mild WNV infections may experience fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. This is called West Nile fever. People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, and paralysis. This is called West Nile neuroinvasive disease (i.e. encephalitis and meningitis). If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Anyone from infants to the elderly can get WNV, however people over 50 years of age have the highest risk of developing a severe illness. People with compromised immune systems are also at increased risk.

Information on WNV and prevention strategies are available on the website at [www.badskeeter.org](http://www.badskeeter.org) or by calling 1-877-WYO-BITE.

By following the "5 D's" people can eliminate breeding sites for mosquitoes and avoid getting bitten:

(1) DAWN AND (2) DUSK - When possible, avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk.

(3) DRESS - Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light colored and made of tightly woven materials to keep mosquitoes away from the skin.

(4) DRAIN - Reduce the amount of standing water in or near your property by draining and/or removing it. Mosquitoes may lay eggs in areas with standing water. See below for more information and tips on reducing the amount of standing water in or near your property.

To reduce standing water, consider the following:

- Repair failed septic systems.
- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.
- If possible, remove old or discarded tires on your property. Used tires have become the most common mosquito breeding site in the country. If you cannot dispose of old tires, you can drill holes in them to allow standing water to drain.
- For containers that must remain on your property, such as bird baths and wading pools, change the water at least once per week.
- Cover trash containers to keep out rainwater.
- Repair leaky water pipes and outside faucets.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with predatory fish.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools even if they are not being used.
- Keep drains, ditches, and culverts free of grass clippings, weeds and trash so water will drain properly.
- Remove all leaf debris.
- Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are kept outdoors.
- Make sure roof gutters drain properly. Clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall to remove leaves or other debris that may clog the drains or gutters.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Clean vegetation and debris from the edge of ponds.
- Drain water from pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.
- Install or repair screens for windows and doors that stay open, so that mosquitoes cannot get indoors.
- Place mosquito netting over infant carriers when you are outdoors with infants.

(5) DEET - For additional protection from mosquitoes, use an insect repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide). Spray clothing with repellents containing permethrin or DEET because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Products containing DEET must be used properly. When Using DEET, be sure to Read and follow instructions on the label to avoid excessive use and over-application. In most circumstances products with 25 to 35 percent DEET provide adequate protection for adults.

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## West Nile Virus Fact Sheet

### What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a flavivirus that can cause human infection. Other flaviviruses include St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV) which is found in the United States, Japanese Encephalitis virus from South East Asia, and Murray Valley fever virus from Australia and New Guinea. WNV as well as other flaviviruses are also classified as arboviruses. Arboviruses belong to several families of viruses that usually infect birds and are transmitted from bird to bird by mosquitoes. Infected mosquitoes can then transmit the virus when biting humans and other mammals. Wyoming has three human diseases caused by arboviruses: West Nile virus infection, Saint Louis encephalitis, and Western Equine encephalitis.

WNV is historically found in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Europe. In 1999, WNV was first identified in the United States in New York City and has since spread to all 48 contiguous states. Hawaii and Alaska have not yet reported WNV activity. In 2004, 2,470 people became ill and 88 people died from

WNV infection in the United States. However, less than 1 percent of the people infected with WNV become seriously ill. About 20% of the people infected develop flu-like symptoms and the majority of people never get sick.

Mosquitoes spread this virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds or animals. WNV is not spread by routine person-to-person contact and there is no evidence that people can get the virus by routine handling of infected animals.

Surveillance for West Nile virus activity in Wyoming was initiated by the Wyoming Department of Health and the University of Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory in 2001 and currently involves the reporting and testing of suspected human cases and dead birds and the testing of sick horses. Suspected human cases are tested in the Wyoming Department of Health's Public Health Laboratory or other regional laboratories and are reported to the Wyoming Department of Health for follow-up. The Wyoming Department of Health keeps track of human cases of WNV so that it can identify potential risk factors for illness.

WNV human infection may range from asymptomatic infection to mild infection (West Nile fever) to severe illness (West Nile neuroinvasive disease). West Nile virus human cases in Wyoming occur primarily in the late summer or early Fall, although the mosquito season in Wyoming is typically April through October. People with mild WNV infections may experience fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. This is called West Nile fever. People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, and paralysis. This is called West Nile neuroinvasive disease, which may include encephalitis, meningitis, and a polio-like syndrome. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider. Please see your primary care physician for more details on human infection and testing.

How can I get West Nile virus infection?

The principal route of human infection is through the bite of an infected mosquito.

In 2002, additional routes became apparent; however, this represented a very small proportion of cases. These routes include receiving transplanted organs and blood transfusions, transplacental (mother to unborn child), possibly through breast-feeding, and through exposure to West Nile infected products in the laboratory.

Who is most at risk?

Anyone can get the virus. People who are more likely to be bitten by mosquitoes (i.e. people who spend a lot of time outdoors) are at an increased risk of developing infection. People over 50 years of age have the highest risk of developing a severe illness because as we age, our bodies have a harder time fighting off disease. People with compromised immune systems (i.e. individuals with HIV/AIDS, cancer patients, organ transplant recipients) are also at increased risk of severe disease.

What are the symptoms?

People with mild infections may experience fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. This is called West Nile fever.

People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, and paralysis. This is called West Nile neuroinvasive disease. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Are there long-term consequences?

While most infections are usually mild, West Nile neuroinvasive disease can result in death or serious brain damage. The CDC notes that neurological effects may be permanent. Some improvements may be

seen over time.

Is there treatment or a vaccine?

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

#### About West Nile Neuroinvasive Disease

The majority of people who get infected with the virus have no illness, or at most, have a relatively mild flu-like illness with fever, headache and fatigue. Rarely will the virus multiply in the central nervous system and cause neuroinvasive disease (infection of the brain and/or spinal cord). Some people who develop West Nile neuroinvasive disease (encephalitis, meningitis, or poliomyelitis-like illness) have serious long-term health problems (up to two-thirds in some studies) and some people never fully recover. Encephalitis and meningitis are illnesses that affect the brain and the lining of the brain. These illnesses are caused by a virus which attacks and destroys some nerve cells and causes brain inflammation and swelling.

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#### How to Protect Yourself

Although mosquitoes are most active at dusk or dawn, some bite during the day. All mosquitoes will bite if you enter an area where they are resting, such as high grass or heavy underbrush. While it is not usually necessary to limit outdoor activity (unless there is evidence of mosquito-borne disease in the area), you can and should reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes.

Common sense steps you can take to minimize the probability of infection include remembering the 5 D's of West Nile Virus:

- (1) DAWN AND (2) DUSK - When possible, avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk.
- (3) DRESS - Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light colored and made of tightly woven materials to keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- (4) DRAIN - Reduce the amount of standing water in or near your property by draining and/or removing it. Mosquitoes may lay eggs in areas with standing water. See below for more information and tips on reducing the amount of standing water in or near your property.

You can protect your family from biting mosquitoes by reducing the amount of standing water available for mosquito breeding in or near your property. To reduce standing water, consider the following:

Repair failed septic systems.

Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.

If possible, remove old or discarded tires on your property. Used tires have become the most common mosquito breeding site in the country. If you cannot dispose of old tires, you can drill holes in them to allow standing water to drain.

For containers that must remain on your property, such as bird baths and wading pools, change the water at least once per week.

Cover trash containers to keep out rainwater.

Repair leaky water pipes and outside faucets.

Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with predatory fish.

Clean and chlorinate swimming pools even if they are not being used.

Keep drains, ditches, and culverts free of grass clippings, weeds and trash so water will drain properly.

Remove all leaf debris.

Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are kept outdoors.  
Make sure roof gutters drain properly. Clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall to remove leaves or other debris that may clog the drains or gutters.  
Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.  
Clean vegetation and debris from the edge of ponds.  
Drain water from pool covers.  
Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.

If you know of specific mosquito control problems or problem areas, call your local city or county public works director, City Hall, or the Board of Supervisors.

(5) DEET - For additional protection from mosquitoes, use an effective insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin. Permethrin may be used on clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear. However, permethrin is not recommended for use on bare skin. Spray clothing with repellents because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. When using any insect repellent or insecticide, be sure to read and follow instructions on the label to avoid excessive use and over-application. In most circumstances, products with 25 to 35 percent DEET provide adequate protection for adults.

Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on product label). Do not use repellents under clothing.

Never use repellents over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.

Do not apply to eyes or mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using sprays, do not spray directly on face - spray on hands first and then apply to face.

Do not allow children to handle the product. When using on children, apply to your own hands first and then put on child. You may not want to apply to children's hands.

Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing. Heavy application and saturation are generally unnecessary for effectiveness. If biting insects do not respond to a thin film of repellent, then apply a bit more.

After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water or bathe. This is particularly important when repellents are used repeatedly in a day or on consecutive days. Also wash treated clothing before wearing it again. (This precaution may vary with repellents - check the product label).

If you or your child gets a rash or other bad reaction from an insect repellent, stop using the repellent, wash the repellent off with mild soap and water, and call a local poison control center for further guidance. If you go to a doctor because of the repellent, take the repellent with you to show your doctor.

More information about insect repellents and insecticides can be found on the National Pesticide Information Centers website at <http://npic.orst.edu/index.html> or at 1-800-858-7378.

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#### Why do we Monitor Dead Birds?

Birds and horses typically become infected with West Nile virus (WNV) before humans, so dead birds and sick and dead horses are an indicator of WNV activity. We use animal surveillance to map the distribution and prevalence of WNV so that health and mosquito control officials are aware of its presence and can take whatever measures are available to mitigate the impact of WNV on human and equine populations. The idea is to identify the virus before humans are affected so that public education and mosquito control can reduce the impact.

#### Dead Bird Reporting

Report only dead crows, ravens, jays, and magpies.

If you find a dead bird on your property, DO NOT SEND it to state or local health agencies. Call the West Nile toll-free number at 1-877-WYO-BITE for instructions. You will be asked to provide the following information: name, phone number, bird species, number dead, address where bird was found, and

approximate date of death.

If the bird(s) are suitable for testing you will be advised on how to handle and submit the carcasses.

If Asked to Send a Dead Bird

Handle dead bird with gloves or put a plastic bag over your hand to pick up the carcass. Then double-bag the bird and add an ice pack if available. Place the bagged bird in a cool place but not in your refrigerator or freezer.

WNV is transmitted primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Persons cannot become infected through routine contact with an infected bird, horse, or human.

You will be advised by the person you speak with at the toll-free number on how the carcass(es) will be transported to the laboratory for testing.

Not every bird that is submitted will be tested. Reasons include bird is too decomposed, excessive birds have already been submitted from the area, bird is wrong species, etc.

Results

Results are usually available within 2 weeks. Persons will be notified ONLY IF the bird is positive.

The Wyoming Department of Health will continue to test jays, magpies, crows, and ravens from the state between May 1 and October 31, 2005.

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For more information, contact:

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