



MEDIA RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT:

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RE: GCHD Encourages Residents to Protect Themselves Against Mosquito-borne Diseases

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is urging residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites following detection of a bird that was positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in Flushing, Genesee County. This is the first positive animal arbovirus case in Genesee County in 2024. Some mosquitoes can carry viruses (known as arboviruses) that can be transmitted to humans through a mosquito bite. Some viruses of this type include WNV, Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEE), and Jamestown Canyon Virus (JCV), among others. The best form of protection against mosquito-borne illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

Arboviruses spread when mosquitos contract the virus from biting infected birds then biting a human. Arboviruses spread to people through bites from infected mosquitos. Symptoms of arboviruses can range from simple fevers to more dangerous, rare complications like encephalitis (swelling of the brain). Infections can occur even when mosquito bite numbers are low. Most cases occur from late-spring through mid-fall. The diseases can affect anyone, however persons younger than age 15 and over age 50 are at greatest risk of severe illness following infection.

Residents can stay healthy by using simple, effective strategies to protect themselves and their families. The following steps are recommended to avoid mosquito-borne diseases, especially prior to outdoor activities:

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered products to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Children under 2 months old should not use repellent, but rather be covered in clothing that covers arms and legs; strollers and baby carriers should be covered with mosquito netting.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening (in good repair) to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.

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GCHD is committed to enhancing community well-being in Genesee County by preventing disease, promoting health, and protecting against environmental hazards. Our mission focuses on creating a healthier, safer environment for all residents.

Use [MDARD's list of licensed pesticide applicator businesses in Michigan](#) to find qualified mosquito abatement applicators in your area. For more information about mosquito-borne diseases, visit Michigan.gov/EmergingDiseases.

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