



BELL COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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First Human Case of West Nile Virus reported in Bell County for 2023

Temple, Texas – Today, Bell County Public Health District (BCPH) announces the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) reported in Bell County for 2023. The patient is a male resident of Bell County and was diagnosed with West Nile neuroinvasive disease. Due to privacy and confidentiality reasons, BCPH does not disclose any additional information about the patient.

WNV is a disease that is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. WNV can infect humans, birds, horses, mosquitos, along with other animals such as dogs or bats and poultry. Poultry are quick to clear WNV infection from their body thus presenting a low risk for transmission. Humans get WNV through infected mosquito bites. Mosquitos cannot bite infected humans and become infected. Generally, humans are at low risk of serious infection and cannot spread WNV from human to human. However, severe WNV infections can cause neurologic complications such as encephalitis and/or meningitis.

[Symptoms of infection](#) may include fever, headache, body aches, a skin rash on the trunk of the body, and swollen lymph nodes, and diarrhea. Those age 50 and older and/or with compromised immune systems are at a higher risk for severe symptoms, which may include stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, vision loss, paralysis, and in rare cases, death.

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for WNV in humans.

This year, BCPH is piloting a mosquito surveillance program. Through surveillance activities, BCPH has found 16 positive sample testing pools as of today in 4 communities in Bell County including Belton, Harker Heights, Killeen, and Temple confirming the presence of the mosquito that transmits WNV in Bell County.

Here are the best steps citizens can take to help protect themselves and their families:

- **DEFEND:** Whenever you're outside, use insect repellents that contain DEET or other EPA-approved repellents and follow instructions.
- **DRESS:** Wear long, loose, and light-colored clothing when outdoors, especially at dawn and dusk.
- **DRAIN:** Drain or treat all standing water in and around your home or workplace where mosquitoes could lay eggs.

"Knowing that we have the presence of West Nile Virus in Bell County, it is important for our citizens to take protective measures for yourselves and your families to minimize the potential for illness. Following the 3Ds is the best way to avoid mosquito bites and minimize sources for the mosquitoes to multiply," said Michael Blomquist, Bell County Public Health District Board of Health Chairman.

For more information, visit the Department of State Health Services West Nile website at txwestnile.org or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at cdc.gov/westnile.

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