NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Warm, humid weather brings mosquitoes with West Nile Virus to Bell County

Bell County – Bell County residents are urged to do their part to prevent mosquitoes on their property and to protect themselves from mosquito-borne diseases, including the West Nile Virus. Over the past six weeks, six positive pools for West Nile virus were discovered through routine monitoring by the Bell County Public Health District (BCPH) in zip codes 76502 (3 pools), 76543 (2 pools) and 76554 (1 positive pool). This testing is part of the BCPH Mosquito Monitoring and Surveillance Program.

West Nile Virus is the most common mosquito-borne disease in the United States. It is typically spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, West Nile Virus does not spread through coughing, sneezing, or touching other people or live animals.

Symptoms of Infection may include fever, headache, body aches, a skin rash on the trunk of the body, and swollen lymph nodes. Those aged 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.

“It’s the time of year when people are spending more time outdoors and knowing that we have the presence of the West Nile Virus in Bell County, it is important for our residents to take protective measures for ourselves and our families to minimize the potential for illness. Following the 4 D’s is the best way to avoid mosquito bites and minimize sources for the mosquitoes to multiply,” said Amy J. Yeager, Bell County Public Health District, Director.
Here are the best steps residents can take to help protect themselves and their families:

1. **DEET:** Whenever you’re outside, use insect repellants that contain DEET or other EPA approved repellants and follow the instructions.

2. **DRESS:** Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing outside.

3. **DRAIN:** Remove all standing water in and around your home. Check places like gutters, birdbaths, tires, planters, etc.

4. **DUSK & DAWN:** Limit outdoor activities during dusk and dawn hours when mosquitoes are most active.

“The Culex mosquito which carries West Nile Virus thrives in warm and humid weather which makes summer in Texas an ideal living space for them,” stated Amy J. Yeager, District Director.

Bell County Public Health District can help provide mosquito dunks to public areas and those that would like some help on their private property can request mosquito dunks/granules. BCPH can provide help as long as supplies last. For public property, BCPH is happy to treat those areas that are brought to our attention with available resources. BCPH cannot treat private property. The owner would have to treat their own property. BCPH would be glad to supply them with dunks and educate them on how best to use them.

The BCPH Mosquito Monitoring and Surveillance Program runs April through late November. This is the second year of the program and BCPH is currently monitoring 22 sites throughout Bell County in urban, suburban, and rural locations.

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

For more information on the Mosquito Monitoring and Surveillance Program, contact the BCPH at 254-532-9800.

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