
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



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Health Department Launches Mosquito Surveillance for West Nile Virus Study

Grand Rapids – Most people would like it if mosquitoes would just go away. Staff at the Kent County Health Department is collecting them by the thousands and they want more. Now through Labor Day, KCHD will place, monitor and maintain 11 mosquito traps in the following zip codes in the county 49503, 49507 and 49519. The goal of monitoring in disease prevention, specifically West Nile Virus (WNV).

The trap, called a Gravid trap, (photos attached) lures pregnant female mosquitoes by creating a false breeding environment. A pungent bait of grass clippings and yeast fools the insects by attracting them with carbon dioxide, a gas found in the exhaled breath of mammals. Mosquitoes end up sucked into a nylon net by a battery operated fan. Each week, the mosquitoes that get trapped will be returned to KCHD where they will be pulverized and tested for West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses. Results will be logged along with geographic information that will provide a nearly real time picture to health authorities.

“We have selected these areas because we know that in the past they have been hot spots for the West Nile Virus,” said Sara Simmonds, Supervising Sanitarian with the department’s Environmental Health division. “Given our past experience, we fully expect that we will find the presence of West Nile Virus within our community. Early detection is critical to help people protect themselves from contracting the virus.”

“Knowing where the virus is located will allow municipalities to make more informed decisions about eradication practices,” said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer with KCHD. “West Nile Virus is a potentially debilitating illness and we know that it is largely preventable through surveillance, education and action.”

West Nile Virus was first detected in the United States in 1999. Since the first case was diagnosed in Michigan in 2001 more than 1100 people have been diagnosed with the disease. 92 people have died. In 2001 and again in 2012, Kent County had the second highest number of West Nile cases in the state. More about West Nile Virus can be found [here](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/). <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>

The best treatment for WNV is prevention. The Kent County Health Department recommends wearing a mosquito repellant that contains 10 – 35% DEET, wearing light colored clothing and staying indoors during dusk. You can help stop mosquitoes from breeding by removing any standing water in your yard and keeping your lawn and shrubs cut. More information about prevention can be found [here](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/CommDisease/pdfs/westnile_qa.pdf). https://www.accesskent.com/Health/CommDisease/pdfs/westnile_qa.pdf

A grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is funding the project.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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