
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Nile Virus Found in Mosquitoes in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS - The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) Environmental Health division found the first positive specimens of West Nile virus this summer in the mosquito population. The infected mosquitoes were discovered in zip code 49506, which includes parts of southeast Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids. THIS IS NOT A HUMAN CASE - no human cases have been reported to KCHD as of today.

This year in June, KCHD started capturing and testing mosquitoes in ten traps strategically placed throughout the County. These devices called "Gravid traps" collect mosquitoes that are then tested for the virus. The surveillance is possible thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Kent County has received the State grant three years in a row. This surveillance allows the County to alert residents to step up prevention measures.

"Finding West Nile virus in one zip code does not mean that it is confined to that area," says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer with KCHD. "The virus will likely be present in other neighboring zip codes to some degree, and the risk remains until at least the first frost of the season. We want people to be aware that they can greatly reduce their own risks by taking some simple precautions."

The City of Grand Rapids said that it is beginning aggressive treatment to reduce the possibility of a widespread West Nile outbreak. Today the City began treating identified areas with larvicide pellets into catch basins and areas of pooled still water.

Prevention is critical in the fight against West Nile, an illness that can be deadly in some people, especially those with weakened immune systems and the elderly. KCHD recommends wearing a mosquito repellent 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 lawns and shrubs cut. Following these tips can be helpful in fighting other mosquito-borne illnesses as well.

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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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