

PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY AT 5:00 PM IN ROOM 206 AT THE COLLIER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MEDICAL ALERT

For Immediate Release 7/24/2003

Contact Person: Deb Milsap 774-8220 Mark Crowley 732-2685

WEST NILE VIRUS MEDICAL ALERT DECLARED IN COLLIER COUNTY

County Health Department announces county's first human case of West Nile Virus

Collier County Health Department Director Joan Colfer, M.D., M.P.H. today announced that Florida Department of Health Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A. Florida declared a Medical Alert for Collier County after a human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) was reported. The case, an 75-year old male from Marco Island, is recovering from the disease.

The County Health Department is also reporting that four additional sentinel chickens have tested positive for WNV. Two of the chickens are from Carnestown and one each from the Seminole State Park and the Harley Davidson Test Track. This brings a cumulative total of 11 chickens testing positive for West Nile Virus during 2003.

“For the first time we have a human case of West Nile Virus in Collier. This medical alert should raise physician and public awareness of this disease in our community,” said Colfer. “This is a preventable disease. By taking a few precautions, you can reduce your exposure to mosquito-borne illnesses.”

The risk of illness is small; less than 1% of people infected become severely ill with West Nile encephalitis or meningitis. Symptoms of WNV may include fever, headache, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. It may also cause muscle weakness. People 50 years of age and older tend to be more severely affected by the disease. Throughout the country last year there were over 4000 cases and 284 deaths.

In order to prevent the potential spread of West Nile Virus and other mosquito borne illnesses, the Collier County Health Department and the Collier Mosquito Control District are advising Collier County residents and visitors to take increased precautions to guard against mosquito bites.

Collier County Health Department

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**Joan M. Colfer, M.D.,
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Follow the 5 D's:

- **Dusk and Dawn** (avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are feeding)
- **Dress** (wear clothing that covers the skin)
- **Deet** (use mosquito repellents including DEET (N, N diethyl-m-toluidide) on skin or pyrethrins on clothing when you are outside)
- **Drainage** (check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs)

Information on WN virus can be found on DOH's Bureau of Epidemiology's website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/hsee/arbo/index.htm> or call the bureau's hotline at 1-888-880-5782 for recorded information.

Additionally, information on arboviruses can be found at the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' website, <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai.html>, or by calling (850) 410-0900.

For further information or questions locally, please contact Collier Mosquito Control District at 436-1000 or Deb Millsap at the Collier County Health Department at 774-8220. To report a suspected West Nile Virus case contact the Epidemiology Division of Collier County Health Department at 774-2690.

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