

Friday, August 15, 2003

**PRESS RELEASE**  
For Immediate Release

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**MEDICAL ALERT ISSUED FOR ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FL**  
**First Human West Nile Virus Case in Escambia County, Florida in 2003**

Today, Escambia County Health Department Director Dr. John J. Lanza announced that Florida Department of Health (DOH) Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., has issued a medical alert for Escambia County, FL after a human case of West Nile (WN) virus encephalitis was confirmed in a 58-year-old male resident of Escambia County, FL. The individual is currently in stable condition.

Physicians should contact the Escambia County Health Department if they suspect an individual may have a mosquito-borne illness. The Department of Health laboratories provide testing services for physicians treating patients with clinical signs of mosquito-borne (arboviral) disease. These signs may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Physicians should submit serum and, if available, cerebrospinal fluid samples to either the Tampa or Jacksonville Department of Health laboratories. People over the age of 50 are at the greatest risk of having severe disease from an arbovirus infection.

The best defense against these viruses is prevention. DOH Official's continue to stress the "5 D's" for prevention:

- **Dusk and Dawn** (avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, for many species this is during the dusk and dawn hours)
- **Dress** (wear clothing that covers skin)
- **DEET** (use mosquito repellents including DEET [N, N diethyl-*m*-toluamide] on skin or permethrins on light-colored clothing when you are outside)
- **Drainage** (check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs).

Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.

**Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites**

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.

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**Escambia County Health Department**  
1295 W. Fairfield Drive • Pensacola, Florida 32501  
John J. Lanza, MD, PhD, MPH, FAAP, CHD Director-Health  
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdEscambia>

- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow

The following instructions are being supplied to residents of Escambia County for the proper handling, packing and delivery of dead birds so that they can be tested for West Nile Virus.

- Birds that are suitable for testing are those that have been dead for less than 12 hours, have no visible insects or odor, and have not been visibly damaged by another predator.
- If the birds are too old or visibly damaged, they can be bagged and thrown in the regular trash or buried.
- If the bird appears to be suitable for testing, they need to be placed in a re-sealable freezer bag by putting your hand in an inside-out bag, grabbing the bird, and pulling the bag over the bird, and closing the bag tightly.
- The bird should be put into a freezer for storage or placed in another freezer bag with ice.
- The bird should be transported in a frozen state, or on ice to the following Environmental Health or Health Department Offices:

**Environmental Health**

1300 West Gregory Street  
Pensacola, FL  
Phone 595-6700

**Molino Clinic**

3470 Hwy 29 North  
Cantonment FL  
Phone 587-5770

**Century Clinic**

501 Church St.  
Century FL  
Phone 256-6200

- The Escambia County Health Department is unable to go to locations to pick up birds.

For information on the web: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdEscambia/>.

For more information on WN virus, EEE and SLE, visit DOH's Bureau of Community Environmental Health's Web site at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/hsee/arbo/index.htm> or call the Bureau's hotline 1-888-880-5782 for recorded information. Additionally, information on these 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. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission maintains a website for reporting wild bird die offs related to West Nile Virus. To report a dead bird, visit: <http://www.wildflorida.org/bird>.

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