



# News Release

Pinellas County  
Department of Public Affairs  
333 Chestnut Street  
Clearwater, FL 33756  
(727) 464-4600 FAX (727) 464-4432  
[www.pinellascounty.org](http://www.pinellascounty.org)

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## For Immediate Release

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**Contact:** Ronnie J. Goodstein, Director  
Department of Public Affairs  
(727) 464-4600  
Nancy Page, Environmental Specialist  
Mosquito Control  
(727) 464-7503  
Dr. Kenny Mitchell, Director  
Pinellas County Animal Services  
(727) 582-2600

## West Nile Virus Detected in Sentinel Chicken

The Florida Department of Health today confirmed the presence of West Nile virus in one of Pinellas County Mosquito Control's sentinel chickens at Lake Maggiore in south Pinellas County. Sentinel chickens serve as a detection system for mosquito-borne arborviral diseases such as West Nile virus. This virus can cause illness and sometimes fatal encephalitis (also called inflammation of the brain) in people, horses, many types of birds, and possibly other animals. It spreads through the bites of infected mosquitoes, but there is no evidence to suggest that it can be spread from person to person or from animal to person. It's important to remember that while one infection has been confirmed in Pinellas County, it does not mean there is an outbreak of West Nile Encephalitis. Residents are asked to remain calm and take sensible precautions to safeguard their health.

Mosquito Control has set additional mosquito traps in the area, and is testing mosquitoes to see which species may be the carrier of the West Nile virus. In addition, crews are continuing aggressive larvicide programs to eliminate mosquito larvae before they turn into adults. The department is also using ultra-low volume fogging trucks to reduce adult mosquito populations when warranted.

Residential backyards can harbor large numbers of mosquito larvae that can grow into adult mosquitoes. Area residents should eliminate mosquito breeding areas around their yards by flushing stagnant water from birdbaths, ponds, flowerpots, boat tarpaulins, old tires or any other receptacle in which water can accumulate. Swimming pools should be adequately chlorinated. Rain barrels should be covered with screening. Ornamental ponds should be stocked with mosquito-eating fish. Mosquitoes that breed in backyard containers usually stay near where they hatch, and many are capable of transmitting disease. Mosquitoes need only ¼ to ½ inch of standing water for the larvae to propagate.

\*\*\*continued\*\*\*

The Pinellas County Health Department offers these additional preventative measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes:

- Check residential screening on doors, porches and patios and repair any rips or tears.
- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes feed, between the hours of dusk and dawn.
- If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, cover as much skin as possible with shoes, long sleeve shirts and long pant legs.
- Use mosquito repellent on exposed skin, in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Horses are susceptible to West Nile virus. Pinellas County Animal Services encourages all horse owners whose animals are not currently vaccinated to contact their veterinarian. The equine West Nile virus vaccination program requires two shots to be administered over a period of 3-6 weeks. Annual vaccine boosters are also recommended. Other preventative measures include keeping horses sheltered during the mosquitoes' feeding period, from dusk to dawn. Fans may be set up in the stables to keep air circulating and reduce the likelihood of mosquito bites. Various equine mosquito repellents are available from area veterinarians as well.

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