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Governor

Volusia County Health Department

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Secretary

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**SENTINEL CHICKENS TEST POSITIVE FOR EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS, WEST NILE VIRUS**

The Volusia County Health Department confirmed Friday that a sentinel chicken in the Hontoon area west of DeLand has tested positive for the West Nile virus. The Health Department also has reason to believe that three other sentinel chickens are suspect at the same location. Confirmation test results are expected June 21.

In addition, five sentinel chickens have tested positive for eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in Volusia County this year, three of those this week. Those chickens are in coops in Deltona and DeLand. Sentinel chickens are tested twice, the first positive result is called a "suspect". The second test is necessary to confirm the presence of viral activity, according to Paul Minshew, Environmental Manager for the Health Department.

The County Health Department and Volusia County Mosquito Control routinely "bleed" sentinel chickens in coops throughout the county to test for the presence of mosquito-borne encephalitis, according to Volusia's Mosquito Control Director Jonas Stewart.

The test positive for the West Nile virus is the second time a sentinel chicken has tested positive for the West Nile virus in Volusia County this year. There have been no human cases of West Nile virus in Florida this year. However, a nine year old Highlands County boy has been confirmed for EEE this week, Minshew said.

"People need to be aware that we are entering the rainy season so mosquito activity will be increasing," said Stewart. "This means people need to take those common sense steps to avoid mosquito bites."

This includes avoiding outdoor activity, especially at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are likely to be looking for blood meals, wearing long sleeved clothing, using mosquito repellants containing DEET (according to label directions) and reducing the standing water around the home.

Volusia County Mosquito Control this weekend will step up surveillance and spraying activity in West Volusia, Stewart said.



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West Nile virus (a form of encephalitis) was detected in the United States in New York in 1999. It was not until June of 2001 that the virus was detected in Florida. Eleven human cases of West Nile virus infection were confirmed last year in addition to 400 infections in horses.

Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds, which may circulate the virus in their blood for a few days. Infected mosquitoes can then transmit WNV to humans and animals while biting to take blood. The virus is located in the mosquito's salivary glands. During blood feeding, the virus may be injected into the human or animal where it may multiply, causing illness. The disease is not directly transmitted between horses, from birds to horses, or from horses to humans.

The Department of Health laboratories provide testing services for patients with clinical signs of arboviral encephalitis. These signs may include headache, fever, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion. Physicians should submit serum and/or cerebrospinal fluid samples to the State Laboratory through their local county health departments.

For more information on mosquito-borne encephalitis, including reporting human cases and dead birds, visit the DOH Bureau of Epidemiology's Arboviral Encephalitis and West Nile Virus website at MyFlorida.com (click on Health and Human Services, then Consumers – Diseases and Conditions, then Arboviral Encephalitis or West Nile Virus) or [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/epi/htopics/arbo/index.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/htopics/arbo/index.htm), or call the Bureau's toll-free hotline at 1-888-880-5782 for recorded information.