



**For Immediate Release**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROVIDES UPDATE ON MOSQUITO-BORNE  
ILLNESSES IN FLORIDA**

**TALLAHASSEE**—Florida Department of Health (DOH) Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., today announced that medical alerts for West Nile (WN) virus that covered 29 counties throughout the state have been lifted. DOH works in conjunction with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), Florida Mosquito Control Association, and state universities year-round to protect people and animals against mosquito-borne illnesses.

“Medical alerts have been lifted based on a considerable drop in new activity for mosquito-borne illnesses and falling temperatures throughout Florida,” said Agwunobi. “We know these illnesses can be transmitted whenever mosquitoes are present. Take care to protect yourself year-round, not just during the peak seasons.”

Agwunobi stressed that while the chance of people contracting WN virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus or St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE) virus is reduced, people in areas with high concentrations of mosquitoes still need to take precautions, such as wearing mosquito repellent and eliminating stagnant water in birdbaths, ponds and other receptacles in which mosquitoes might breed.

Additionally, officials encourage anyone who discovers a dead bird to report it via the Internet. The bird mortality reporting system is located on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s website at: [www.wildflorida.org/bird/](http://www.wildflorida.org/bird/). If people do not have access to the Internet, they may report dead birds to their county health department or local FWCC office.

There were a total of 89 confirmed human WN virus cases resulting in six deaths in Florida in 2003, compared to 28 cases with two deaths in 2002. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of December 17, there were 8,912 cases of WN virus reported from 46 states, with 211 deaths. Additionally, two human EEE cases were reported this year to the Florida State Health Office, while no cases of SLE were identified. DOH also investigated eight cases of locally acquired malaria in 2003.

Nearly 500 dead birds were found with WN in Florida, along with over 1,200 sentinel chickens testing positive for the infection. FDACS reports 117 horses in the state contracted WN, and over 200 horses were infected with EEE.

For more information on mosquito borne illnesses, visit the DOH website at: [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us), the CDC website at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or call your local county health department.

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