

What Tire Pile Owners Should Know About West Nile Virus

For more information, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us or call 877-PA-HEALTH

What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, a brain inflammation. Infected birds pass the virus to mosquitoes, which pass the virus onto animals and people. In 1999, WNV first appeared in New York and then birds pass the virus to spread into Pennsylvania in 2000. WNV can now be found in all 48 contiguous states. In Pennsylvania, cases of WNV usually occur in the mid-summer or early fall, although mosquito season is usually April-October.

The principal route of human infection with WNV is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Other methods of transmission, which represent a very small percentage of cases; include blood transfusion, organ transplantation and mother-to-child (ingestion of breast milk and transplacental).

Who is most at risk?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), all residents of areas where virus activity has been identified are at risk of getting WNV; persons over 50 years of age have the highest risk of severe disease.

What are the symptoms?

People with mild infections may experience fever, headaches, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands. People with more severe infections may experience high fever, headaches, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, occasional convulsions and paralysis. If a person has any of these symptoms contact your family physician.

Is there treatment?

There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. While most people fully recover from the virus, in some severe cases hospitalization may be needed.

What is Pennsylvania doing to prevent mosquito breeding?

A multi-agency effort led by the state departments of Health, Environmental Protection (DEP) and Agriculture has created a comprehensive, statewide plan to try to limit the impact of virus outbreak in Pennsylvania.

One of the main objectives of the program is to reduce potential mosquito production across the state. Eliminating places for mosquitoes to live is an important part of an integrated pest management program, and whenever possible is the preferred solution to mosquito control. When source reduction is not possible, larval and adult mosquito control is conducted.

Could a tire pile be a mosquito-breeding site?

Tire piles could provide suitable areas for mosquitoes to live, including those known to carry WNV. When discarded tires are allowed to accumulate even a small amount of water, they become attractive sites for mosquitoes to lay their eggs. For example, during the course of one season, thousands of mosquitoes can emerge from just one tire. If tires infested with mosquito eggs, larvae or pupae are transported, the potential to spread mosquito populations increases. This is one of the theories on how WNV was introduced into the United States.

How can a property owner prevent mosquito breeding?

It is the responsibility of the tire pile owners to make sure that the pile does not create a nuisance or health hazard. There are a number of ways to eliminate mosquito production in tire piles.

Standing water in the tires should be eliminated. This can be accomplished by properly storing tires under a tarp or other cover, removing the side wall, or drilling holes in the back of the tire.

In situations where eliminating mosquito production areas is not a practical alternative, larviciding is the most effective control technique. For treatment options, contact the local county WNV coordinator. The coordinator can

help to determine what control techniques would best suit the pile, and what type of control activities should be conducted.

If the property owner is concerned about a tire pile in the area, contact the owner of the site or the local officials to find out what mosquito-control measures are being taken.

Remember, electromagnetic devices, ultrasound devices and Vitamin B are not effective in preventing mosquito bites.

Where is there more information?

Visit the West Nile website at www.westnile.state.pa.us, call 717-346-8238 or contact DEP at the appropriate regional office below.

DEP Regional Offices

Northwest Region

230 Chestnut St.
Meadville, PA 16335-3481

Waterways and Wetlands: 814-332-6945

Counties: *Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren*

North-central Region

208 W. Third St., Suite 101
Williamsport, PA 17701-6448

Waterways and Wetlands: 570-327-3636

Counties: *Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union*

Northeast Region

2 Public Square
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-1915

Waterways and Wetlands: 610-861-2070

Counties: *Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming*

Southwest Region

400 Waterfront Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745

Waterways and Wetlands: 412-442-4000

Counties: *Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland*

South-central Region

909 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200

Clean Water/Waterways and Wetlands: 717-705-4700

Counties: *Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York*

Southeast Region

2 East Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401-4915

Clean Water: 484-250-5900

Counties: *Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery*

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us, keyword: West Nile.