

**Alabama receives an additional \$550,000 to fight West Nile virus**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Charles Woernle, M.D., M.P.H.  
(334) 206-5325

William Johnston, D.V.M.  
(334) 206-5969

Alabama is one of 14 states and two cities to receive top priority funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention because it is among the hardest hit by the West Nile virus. An award of \$550,000 was presented to state officials Wednesday. The state previously received funding of \$300,000, as well as technical and scientific support.

The Alabama Department of Public Health will spend \$250,000 of these supplemental funds on laboratory testing to identify West Nile virus and to conduct public education campaigns to help local communities protect themselves from the virus, and \$300,000 will be transferred to the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, which will decide how to help local communities in mosquito control activities.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Unfortunately, we are seeing an increase in West Nile virus cases. It is important for the public to protect themselves by taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites."

The CDC conducts surveillance, which means tracking a disease to identify the places where it exists and how much activity there is in nature with the infection. This information establishes where humans are at greatest risk for contracting a disease. In the case of West Nile virus, surveillance systems have allowed the CDC to closely track infected mosquito populations through such means as reporting of dead birds.

"I remain extremely concerned about the health and safety of all Alabamians, particularly our most vulnerable citizens, our children and seniors," said Gov. Don Siegelman. "I will continue to make sure that state agencies collaborate and do everything possible to reduce the risk and spread of the West Nile virus in Alabama."

The Alabama Department of Public Health reports two additional, non-fatal human cases of West Nile virus infection. The latest reported cases have occurred in a 77-year-old male and a 56-year-old male, both Montgomery County residents. To date, eight human cases of West Nile virus infection have been reported in Alabama. Additionally, 10 horses, 294 birds and 47 mosquito pools have been confirmed with West Nile virus. The virus has been detected in 46 of Alabama's 67 counties. The department continues to believe that the virus is likely present in every Alabama community.

WNV and other mosquito-borne viruses such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis are transmitted from bird to mosquito to bird. Occasionally, the same mosquitoes will take blood from mammals,

including humans and horses. Mosquitoes pick up the virus by feeding on the blood of infected birds. The disease cannot be spread from person to person or from animals to people.

Since mosquitoes are commonly found throughout much of Alabama, health officials offer these practical strategies for the mosquito season:

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; CLOTHING AND AROMATICS

- Wear loose fitting, light colored clothes to help prevent mosquitoes from reaching the skin and to retain less heat, making yourself less "attractive" to mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are more attracted to dark colors.
- When possible, wear long sleeves and long pants.
- Avoid perfumes, colognes, fragrant hair sprays, lotions and soaps, which attract mosquitoes.

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; REPELLENTS

- Follow the label instructions when applying repellents. Permethrin repellents are only for clothes - not for application on the skin.
- When using repellents avoid contact with eyes, lips and nasal membranes.
- Use concentrations of less than 10 percent when applying DEET-containing products on children.
- Apply DEET repellent on arms, legs, and other exposed areas, but never under clothing.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Citronella candles and repellents containing citronella can help, but their range is limited.
- Herbs such as cedar, geranium, pennyroyal, lavender, cinnamon, and garlic are not very effective.

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; AROUND THE HOME

- Mosquito activity peaks at dusk and again at dawn; restrict outdoor activity during these hours.
- Keep windows and door screens in good condition.
- Replace porch lights with yellow light bulbs that will attract fewer insects.
- Mosquitoes breed in standing water; empty all water from old tires, cans, jars, buckets, drums, plastic wading pools, toys, and other containers.
- Clean clogged gutters.
- Remove the rim from potted plants and replace water in plant/flower vases weekly.
- Replenish pet watering dishes daily and rinse bird baths twice weekly.
- Fill tree holes and depressions left by fallen trees with dirt or sand.
- Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito fish or use larvicide "doughnuts."

8/28/02