



CIRSA HAZARD ALERT

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Your Partner in Risk Management

West Nile Virus

In 2012, there were 131 reported cases of West Nile virus with five deaths in Colorado. Nationally, U.S. health officials say that 2012 was the worst year ever for West Nile deaths with 286 total deaths -- two more than the 2002 record. These viruses are transmitted to people and animals by infected mosquitoes, specifically *Culex tarsalis*, a medium-sized mosquito that feeds in a few hours around dawn and dusk. They breed in almost any source of standing water, including irrigated fields. These viruses are maintained in a bird-mosquito-bird cycle when a mosquito feeds on an infected bird's blood. Then, the newly infected mosquito transmits the virus to a human, another mammal, or a bird. These viruses are prevalent from May to September when mosquitoes are most abundant, but the greatest risk to humans occurs from August through early September.

Signs and Symptoms:

Most people who are infected with West Nile virus do not become ill or have symptoms. About 20% of people develop a mild infection called West Nile fever. Common signs and symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally skin rash, swollen lymph glands, and eye pain. Mild symptoms of West Nile fever usually resolve on their own.

Less than 1% of people infected show more serious signs and symptoms, such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) or inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Signs and symptoms of these diseases include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, disorientation or confusion, stupor or coma, tremors, convulsions, pain, and even partial paralysis. Permanent brain damage and death could result. Seek medical attention right away if any of these conditions exist.

Preventing West Nile Virus:

Everyone in Colorado can follow the "Four Ds" to help prevent mosquito bites:

1. Use DEET or another approved insect repellent every time you are outside during high risk times. A product with 23.8% DEET provides 302 minutes of full protection, wherein those with 6.7% DEET provide 112 minutes of protection.
2. DRAIN all standing water around your home where mosquitoes breed. Unclog roof drains, remove old tires or any unused containers that might hold water. Don't overwater lawns and gardens. Replace water in kiddie pools and bird feeders at least every five days.
3. DRESS properly in long sleeve shirts and long pants while outdoors during high risk times or in mosquito-infected areas.
4. At DAWN and DUSK when mosquitoes are most active, limit your outside activity.

Helpful Links:

Fight the Bite Colorado: <http://www.fightthebitecolorado.com/>

Boulder County Mosquito Control: <http://www.bouldercounty.org/env/water/pages/wmv.aspx>

Colorado State University Extension: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/westnile/reslist.html>

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment: <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDPHE-DCEED/CBON/1251607766375>