

2010 Plan for Surveillance for West Nile Virus Disease

Local Boards of Health Will NOT be Picking up Dead Birds for Testing

The Longmeadow Board of Health will not be picking up dead crows and dead bluejays this summer for submission to the Mass. State Lab for testing for infection with West Nile Virus.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has decided that testing of dead birds is not providing the most useful information for predicting the occurrence of human West Nile disease. Instead the Department will be relying on the sampling of mosquito pools for the presence of infected mosquitos. West Nile Virus Disease (WNV) is directly transmitted by mosquitos carrying West Nile Virus to humans through mosquito bites.

Kindly refrain from calling the Board of Health for requests for pick-ups of dead birds unless several birds are found dead on a single day on a residential lot or in a wetlands area. Residents may dispose of dead birds found on their property by depositing the bird remains in a double plastic bag and disposing of this double plastic bag in the regular household trash.

In 2009 fortunately there were no human cases of West Nile Virus Disease in Massachusetts and the number of cases and deaths nationally were considerably lower than in the previous two years. Despite this data that would indicate that the risk of West Nile Virus Disease might be waning, nevertheless the following recommendations still remain in effect for the summer of 2010 to reduce the risk of this mosquito-borne disease:

- Remove any standing water around your residence; standing water can accumulate in empty flower pots and trash cans, bird baths and clogged gutters
- Examine and fix any holes in window and door screens
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET, permethrin, IR 3535, or picari when you plan to be outdoors
- Try to avoid exercising or other outdoor activity during the period of sunrise and toward sunset when mosquito activity is high. If you choose to be out at those times of day, it is advisable to wear pants and long sleeves