



PUBLIC HEALTH IS PRICELESS

# VERMILION COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Contact: Douglas Toole, 431-2662, ext. 243

The Vermilion County Health Department is asking the public for assistance with the collection of dead birds to test for West Nile Virus.

“Finding out if the virus is present in Vermilion County allows us to alert residents to take precautions when they are outside and make sure their homes are free of places where mosquitoes breed,” said Public Health Administrator Jenny Trimmell.

The Vermilion County Health Department will accept a limited number of certain types of dead birds -- including crows, blue jays, grackles, starlings, sparrows, finches, robins, cardinals, flycatchers, swallows, catbirds, mockingbirds, mourning dove, pigeon, hawks, owls, warblers and wrens – for testing.

Not all birds will be accepted for testing, Trimmell said. Larger birds such as water fowl or vultures will not be tested for West Nile Virus. The birds must be dead, but must be freshly dead and intact. Dead birds which have been attacked or partially eaten by animals, or which are missing their eyes, or which are decomposing, cannot be tested.

Dead birds are collected locally and then sent to the state laboratory to determine if they have been bitten by infected mosquitoes. Positive results may mean the virus is present in a community.

A mosquito infected with West Nile virus can spread the disease by biting humans. The virus was first noted in Illinois in the summer of 2001. By 2002, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported over 800 human cases of West Nile in Illinois. No human cases of West Nile virus in Vermilion County have been reported to the Illinois Department of Public Health since a single case in 2006.

West-Nile-virus-positive mosquitoes have already been identified in Illinois this year in St. Clair and Macon counties.

The state health department says that most people are not affected when bitten by a West Nile-infected mosquito, but some people, including those who are over the age of 50 and who may have chronic health problems are most at risk from the West Nile virus.

To report a dead bird in Vermilion County for possible testing, call the health department at 431-2662, ext. 247. Additional information is available on the health department’s website at [www.vchd.org](http://www.vchd.org).

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