

NEWS

For Immediate Release

July 30, 2021

West Nile Virus-positive mosquito pools detected in Ada and Elmore Counties; rabid bat discovered in Boise County

Central District Health encourages continued summer safety practices

CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH, Idaho - A new school year may be starting soon, but summer activities and recreation remain in full swing. With a rabid bat recently found in Boise County and mosquitoes in Ada and Elmore Counties testing positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), Central District Health (CDH) wants to remind people to stay safe by protecting themselves from such threats and possible related illnesses. "These are common threats that we see each summer, but we want to remind people they need to remain diligent in protecting themselves from mosquito bites, and that wildlife, like bats, can be a source of rabies – it's a good opportunity for parents to talk to their kids about ways to stay safe, too," said Lindsay Haskell, Communicable Disease Control Manager at Central District Health.

Positive West Nile Virus Mosquitoes in Ada and Elmore Counties

This week, mosquito pools in Ada and Elmore Counties tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). As part of their surveillance and abatement programs, both counties set mosquito traps that are tested regularly for the presence of WNV. Both Ada and Elmore Counties have treated the areas where the positive mosquito pools were detected to reduce the risk of human or animal WNV infection. In Ada County, three trap locations in Kuna tested positive for WNV; in Elmore County, just one location tested positive along Canyon Creek Road, north of Mountain Home.

For humans WNV is usually contracted from the bite of an infected mosquito; it is not spread from person-to-person through casual contact like coughing, sneezing, or touching. Symptoms of infection can include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash. Most people (8 out of 10) infected with WNV do not develop any symptoms. However, in some cases, the virus can cause severe illness, especially in people older than 60, and may require hospitalization. On rare occasion, it can lead to death.

To reduce the likelihood of WNV infection, avoid mosquitoes, particularly between dusk and dawn when they are most active. In addition, you should:

- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors and apply DEET or other EPA-approved insect repellent to exposed skin and clothing. Carefully follow instructions on the product label, especially for children.
- Insect-proof your home by repairing or replacing screens.
- Reduce standing water on your property; check and drain toys, trays, or pots outdoors that may hold water and harbor mosquito eggs.
- Change birdbaths, static decorative ponds, and animal water tanks weekly because they may provide a suitable mosquito habitat.

WNV does not usually affect domestic animals, such as dogs and cats, but it can cause severe illness in horses and certain species of birds. Although there is no vaccine available for people, there are several vaccines available for horses. People are advised to vaccinate their horses.

Rabid bat found in Boise County

A bat found in Boise County has tested positive for rabies. The bat was found in a swimsuit that had been stored outside overnight. This is the first rabid bat reported in CDH's jurisdiction this year and increases the [state's reported rabid bat count](#) to five so far this season. Those who had contact with the bat are receiving preventive rabies treatment, which is highly effective.

Without timely intervention, rabies infection is virtually 100 percent fatal in people and animals. CDH reminds people to avoid contact with bats, which can be a carrier of the rabies virus. In Idaho, bats with rabies are typically reported between March and November. Last year, 17 bats tested positive for rabies statewide; no area in Idaho is considered rabies-free. Public health officials typically see an uptick in calls and concerns from the public related to bat exposures in late August and September when Idaho bats are often migrating.

Bites are considered the primary way rabies is transmitted, however, bat bites can be small and hard to see. Waking up in a room with a bat, without having a clear idea of the bat's behavior during the night can put people and pets at risk for rabies infection. **Whenever possible, a bat found in an area (inside or outside) where people or pets may have been exposed should be captured and submitted for rabies testing.** Specific steps should be followed when collecting a bat for testing. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has produced a helpful video on how to safely capture a bat:

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>

While bats are an important part of our ecosystem and most do not carry rabies, CDH offers the following tips to protect yourself and pets:

- Never touch a bat with your bare hands.
- If you have had an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention.
- If you come in contact with a bat, save the bat in a container without touching it and contact your health department to arrange testing for rabies. Whenever possible, the bat should be tested to rule out an exposure to rabies. During regular business hours in Ada, Boise and Elmore Counties, call 208-327-7499 and in Valley County, call 208-634-7194. After business hours in all counties, call 1-800-632-8000.

- Always vaccinate your pets for rabies, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter.

Medical therapy given to people soon after a possible rabies exposure is extremely effective in preventing rabies. Without timely medical treatment, rabies infection is virtually 100 percent fatal in people and animals.

More Information

- Ada County West Nile Virus Map – click on “Mosquito Tracker” icon | <https://adacounty.id.gov/weedpestmosquito/mosquito-abatement/>
- Idaho West Nile Virus information and tracking map by county | www.westnile.idaho.gov
- CDC: Talk to your kids about rabies | <https://www.cdc.gov/rabiesandkids/>
- CDC: Bats and Rabies | www.cdc.gov/rabies
- Track rabid animal counts in Idaho | <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/diseases-conditions/rabies>

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