

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

For Immediate Release

York Region begins 2009 West Nile virus control activities*Residents are advised that dead bird pick-up is no longer available*

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York will begin implementing the 2009 West Nile virus (WNV) Control Plan in May, including larviciding, mosquito and human surveillance and public education. Effective this year, dead bird pick-up will no longer be offered as part of York Region’s WNV Control Plan.

“Since 2002, the surveillance of dead birds has been important in establishing the geographic location of West Nile virus activity in York Region and other municipalities across Ontario,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. “At this stage of the surveillance and control program, we will adjust our strategies and resources to help limit the impact of this disease in our community.”

With the continued presence of WNV confirmed from year to year, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has acknowledged the virus is established in Ontario. As a result, municipalities in Ontario will no longer be conducting a WNV dead bird surveillance program. In conjunction with municipalities across Ontario, York Region will no longer pick up dead birds or ask residents to report dead bird sightings in 2009.

York Region Community and Health Services will continue to use mosquito surveillance in addition to other factors such as temperature, precipitation and time of year to determine the human health risk of WNV in York Region.

“Personal protection is one of the most important things you can do to avoid exposure to the virus,” said Town of Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Chair of the Region’s Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee. “We will continue to support on-going West Nile virus public education campaigns to help keep residents safe.”

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when feeding on an infected bird. The disease can also be passed on from the infected female mosquito to her eggs and subsequent larvae produced.

The risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito and becoming seriously ill as a result of WNV is low. About four out of every five people infected by WNV do not show any symptoms or signs of illness at all.

The symptoms for WNV illness consist of fever, muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, severe headache and a sudden sensitivity to light. For a very rare few, the virus causes serious neurological illness including an inflammation of the brain called encephalitis.

In 2008, there was one confirmed human case of WNV, two WNV-positive birds and two WNV-positive mosquito pools in York Region.

For more information on this or any other health-related topic, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York WNV Control Plan, please visit www.york.ca and click on the West Nile virus link.

- 30 -

Media Contact: Jennifer Mitchell-Emmerson, Community and Health Services, York Region
Phone: 905 830-4444 Ext. 4016 / After-hours Cell: 905 251-5553
Email: jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca

Attachment: York Region’s 2009 West Nile virus Control Plan



Wednesday, April 22, 2009

For Immediate Release

York Region's 2009 West Nile virus Control Plan

NEWMARKET – The York Region West Nile virus (WNV) Control Plan for 2009 includes:

- Public education regarding effective measures to prevent exposure to WNV
- Mosquito and human surveillance
- WNV control activities, including a larviciding strategy:
 - The first larvicide application will take place in June with subsequent applications in July, August and September. These applications will target all catch basins along Regional and municipal roads and in catch basins on private property as required.
 - Methoprene is the larvicide to be used. It comes in a slow-release pellet-like formulation and is administered in catch basins when the mosquito is in the larval stage of development. It interferes with the mosquito life cycle, preventing the mosquito larva from reaching maturity. It is not sprayed. It has been approved by both the provincial and federal governments and is considered low risk for humans, pets and the environment when it is applied according to label directions.
 - Larvicide will be applied by licensed Ministry of the Environment applicators. Treated catch basins will be marked with a coloured dot.
 - Residents who are concerned about catch basins on private property are requested to place a mesh screen over the catch basin to prevent mosquitoes from entering and exiting. A limited number of rear-yard catch basins located on private property will be treated with larvicide on a case-by-case basis.
 - In addition, the larvicide Bti. and *Bacillus sphaericus* may be placed in ditches and temporary or permanent standing water pools, including storm water management ponds, if evidence of mosquito breeding is found. These are naturally occurring bacterium found in the soil.

Protect yourself from WNV

Prevention and protection are the best ways to protect yourself and your family from WNV. These simple common sense precautions should be taken:

- Minimize outdoor activities when mosquitoes are most active, such as dusk, night and dawn
- Wear protective clothing such as long sleeved shirts, full-length trousers, socks, light coloured clothing and tuck pant legs into socks when possible
- Consider using an insect repellent, as directed
- Make sure screens on your home are tight-fitting and in good repair
- Eliminate stagnant water around your property which may gather in pool covers, flower pots, children's pools, old tires and birdbaths

Discontinuation of Dead Bird Surveillance

Effective in 2009, Ontario municipalities will no longer be conducting WNV dead bird surveillance programs. West Nile virus is established in Ontario and dead bird surveillance is no longer needed as an early risk indicator or to determine geographic distribution in York Region. The purpose of collecting birds was to assess the presence of the virus in Ontario, which is no longer necessary. York Region Community and Health Services will continue to use mosquito surveillance in addition to other factors such as temperature, precipitation and time of year to determine the human health risk of WNV in York Region.

... Continued on Page 2

What to do if you find a dead bird

- If you find a dead bird, bury the bird on your property at least two feet deep
- Do not handle dead birds with bare hands or dispose of dead birds through the municipal garbage system
- When handling with any dead wildlife, always wear leak-proof rubber gloves or use two layers of a leak-proof plastic bag inverted over your hand
- After touching or handling a dead animal, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Mosquitoes become infected when feeding on an infected bird. The disease can also be passed on from the infected female mosquito to her eggs and subsequent larvae that are produced. There have been no cases of WNV in humans from contact with infected birds when proper precautions were taken.

For more information on WNV or any other health-related topic, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

For more information on the Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

- 30 -

Media Contact: Jennifer Mitchell-Emmerson, Community and Health Services, York Region
Phone: 905 830-4444 Ext. 4016 / After-hours Cell: 905 251-5553
Email: jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca