

September 11, 2019

First human case of West Nile Virus this year reported

MOBILE, Alabama — A confirmed lab test result has come back as positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in the community, the Mobile County Health Department’s Infectious Disease & Outbreaks (ID&O) division has reported.

Because of patient privacy rights under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), no additional identifying information will be made available.

“The public should assume that there are mosquitoes carrying the disease throughout Mobile County,” Dr. Bernard H. Eichold II, Health Officer for Mobile County said. “Don’t let your guard down.”

This is the first human case in 2019. There were 13 human cases reported in 2018 for Mobile County.

Humans with WNV and other mosquito-borne diseases often have symptoms of high fever, severe headache, nausea, stiff neck, confusion, muscle weakness, paralysis, disorientation, and seizures that are severe enough to require medical attention, Dr. Eichold said. In rare cases, WNV can cause coma or death. The seriousness of an illness may depend on a person’s health and age.

The risk of encephalitis spread by mosquitoes is highest from August through the first freeze in the fall, Dr. Eichold said. Paul Efird, an entomologist who oversees MCHD’s Vector Services, said his department will increase spraying and conduct door-to-door surveys in the immediate areas. Inspectors will also attempt to trap adult mosquitoes and test them for the presence of WNV.

Health officials warn that it is extremely important that people taking part in outdoor activities make every effort to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes and should always keep mosquito repellent with them when outdoors. Mosquito activity peaks at dusk and again at dawn.

WNV is transmitted from bird to mosquito to bird. Mosquitoes can spread these viruses by feeding on the blood of infected birds and then biting another host animal or mammal such as a human or a horse.

Although humans and horses can become ill from the infection, the disease cannot be spread from people or horses. The likelihood of transmission to humans and horses can be decreased by personal mosquito avoidance and the use of WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) vaccines in horses. There are no WNV or EEE vaccines available for humans.

To report an issue with mosquitoes, call 251-690-8124 or email VectorServices@mchd.org. To learn more, please visit <http://mchd.org> and under “Services” select “Vector Control.”