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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WISCONSIN DISCONTINUES DEAD BIRD REPORTING: Tips for Preventing West Nile Virus

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services Division of Public Health announced earlier this year that the Dead Bird Reporting Hotline has been discontinued. When in operation, the hotline allowed Wisconsin citizens to bring certain dead birds to their local health department for West Nile virus testing. Surveillance done through this program has shown that West Nile virus is established in our region, eliminating the need for continued testing. If you find a dead bird, you can now refer to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Health Program for instructions: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/wildlifehealth.html>

The risk of West Nile virus is present anytime mosquitos are active, typically from May to September in Wisconsin but they can stay active until it is too cold for them to survive. Most people who develop symptoms experience mild symptoms (fever, headache, rash, etc.) but some can become severely ill (paralysis, encephalitis, coma), and in rare cases it can be fatal. There is no treatment available for West Nile virus.

Few mosquitos actually carry the virus, but it is important to take prevention steps when spending time outside. Follow these steps to “Fight the Bite” and prevent illness from mosquitos:

- **Use repellent on skin and clothing** – use insect repellents on your skin and apply permethrin to your clothes and gear.
- **Wear appropriate outdoor clothing** -- wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, socks, and shoes when outside during peak mosquito activity hours (dusk and dawn) and apply repellent to any skin not covered by clothing. Loose-fitting and thicker clothing is more difficult for mosquitoes to bite through.
- **Avoid direct contact with mosquitos** – place tightly sealed screens on windows and doors. Stay indoors during peak mosquito activity hours (dusk and dawn).
- **Reduce mosquito breeding habitats** – mosquitos need water to breed, so drain anything in your yard that collects water or allows water to stand.
- **Apply pesticides outdoors** – apply mosquito-killing pesticides in the springtime to reduce the number of mosquitos in your yard. Visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/mosquito/bite-prevention.htm> for information on how to safely apply pesticides.

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services’ Mosquito Bite Prevention page at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/mosquito/bite-prevention.htm> and West Nile virus page at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/mosquito/wnv-about.htm>.

Questions? Call the Washburn County Health Department at 715-635-4400 or email us at health@co.washburn.wi.us.