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CONTACT:
Christina Anthony &
Matt Johnson, PIOs
pio@kalcounty.com

West Nile Virus Detected in Kalamazoo County

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Through its seasonal mosquito surveillance efforts, the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department’s Environmental Health Division reports the first positive detection of West Nile Virus in Kalamazoo County and the second in Michigan this year. The positive detection came from a mosquito pool, or group of female mosquitoes of the same species, within Kleinstuck Nature Preserve.

“The results demonstrate why mosquito surveillance is so important in Kalamazoo County,” said Environmental Health Division Manager Lucus Pols. “Early detection is the key to notifying our community of the continued need to be vigilant in mosquito bite prevention.”

Transmitted to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes, West Nile Virus is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While most infected with West Nile Virus may not show any symptoms, about one in five people develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and fatigue. West Nile Virus can lead to severe neurological complications and death in rare cases, especially among older adults and individuals with weakened immune systems.

In 2022, Michigan reported 77 positive West Nile Virus mosquito pools, reinforcing the importance of prevention measures, including the following:

- **Use Insect Repellents:** Apply Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents containing DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and 2-undecanone. Read labels before applying.
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks treated with 0.5% permethrin to minimize skin exposure to mosquitoes.
- **Avoid Peak Mosquito Activity:** Mosquitoes are most active from around dusk to dawn, so try to limit outdoor activities during these times.
- **Eliminate Standing Water:** Drain and rid areas that hold water, such as plant pots, tires, clogged gutters, and bird baths. Standing water can serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- **Screen Windows and Doors:** Ensure windows and doors are equipped with screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering indoor spaces.

The Environmental Health Division will continue mosquito surveillance and testing throughout Kalamazoo County until the end of September when mosquito populations tend to decline significantly. For more information about mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile Virus, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/mosquito-borne/default.html>.

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