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WEST NILE VIRUS, HUMAN - USA (MONTANA)

A ProMED-mail post

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Date: Tue 12 Nov 2002

From: Marianne Hopp <mjhopp12@yahoo.com>

Source: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS),
press release, Fri 8 Nov 2002 [edited]

<http://www.dphhs.state.mt.us/news/press_releases/november/west_nile_virus_identified.htm>

Montana: first human case of WNV infection contracted within state

HELENA: The first case of West Nile virus (WNV) infection contracted by a person in Montana has been confirmed in Yellowstone County, where a resident's diagnosis became known on Fri 8 Nov 2002, according to county and state public health officials. The confirmation came after blood samples tested positive at a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) laboratory. The Billings resident became ill in mid September 2002, and he required a brief hospital admission for meningitis, one of the more severe effects of WNV, but has made a full recovery.

Health officials said a heavy volume of samples awaiting tests at the federal laboratory contributed to the delay in learning of the results. CDC has diagnosed over 3500 WNV cases this year, including more than 200 that resulted in death.

The Billings man had no recent history of traveling outside Montana, so officials are presuming that he acquired the illness in state. "We have known for months that the virus is in Montana because of its presence in horses and birds, but now we do have our first official human case," state epidemiologist Dr Todd Damrow said. "Fortunately, because of the onset of winter-like weather, the state health department feels confident that the virus will not spread further in Montana until next spring."

WNV is spread by infected mosquitoes. Previously, Montana had reported two "imported" cases of the virus, both from people who contracted the illness outside of the state but were diagnosed here. State agencies, including DPHHS and the departments of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and Livestock, have actively worked to notify Montana residents of the disease presence. Educational information about WNV is available at .

Because WNV is most serious in horses, veterinarians have worked closely with livestock owners to make them aware. Likewise, FWP officials are working with hunters, anglers, and recreationists, and DPHHS has notified physicians, hospitals, and county health offices. The departments of Environmental Quality and Agriculture are also being kept informed of developments, as is the state Disaster and Emergency Services Division. WNV is not communicable -- it cannot be transmitted from person to person or from animal to person -- and it is not transmitted by ingestion (for example, by eating an infected game bird or animal, or accidentally swallowing an insect).

Most people bitten by infected mosquitoes will not get the disease, and those who do might not even know because they will recover without having symptoms. In fact, according to CDC information, if 1000 people get infected, 200 (20 per cent) could feel some degree of illness; 100 will feel sick enough to see a physician; and 7 out of the 1000 will develop encephalitis or meningitis. If 15 per cent of the 7 people die -- the upper end of the CDC range -- one death would probably result. This is how the fatality rate of 0.1 per cent is calculated -- one person in 1000 who are infected.

There is no human vaccine for WNV, but there is a vaccine for horses. The disease spreads when infected mosquitoes feed on birds; the birds then carry the disease with them to new areas as they migrate and are fed on by other mosquitoes, which then become infected carriers. A person bitten by an infected mosquito could show symptoms from 3 to 15 days after the bite. Symptoms include high fever, headache, stiff neck, muscle weakness or paralysis, and confusion. Anyone thinking they have WNV symptoms should contact their physician.

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[see also:
 West Nile virus update 2002 - (USA) (29) [20021107.5747](#)
 West Nile virus, humans - USA (VT, MT ex OH): prob. [20020911.5281](#)
 West Nile virus, equine - USA (MT): probable [20020823.5120](#)
 West Nile virus update 2002 - USA (01) [20020506.4109](#)]

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