

Wednesday, April 28, 2010



For Immediate Release

## **York Region begins 2010 West Nile virus control activities**

*Annual activities kickoff in May; Reported cases declining over past three years*

**NEWMARKET** – The Regional Municipality of York will begin 2010 West Nile virus (WNV) program activities on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, including mosquito breeding site monitoring, public education and human surveillance. Mosquito larviciding activities and viral testing will begin mid-June.

West Nile virus (WNV) 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.

“During the past three years, there has been a decrease in West Nile virus activity reported to York Region public health,” said Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region’s Medical Officer of Health. “However, higher temperatures, precipitation levels and humidity are linked to mosquito population and the increased spread of West Nile virus in mosquitoes and human infection rates. Residents are reminded to remain vigilant and use effective prevention and protection techniques to reduce risk.”

In York Region, there were no human cases of West Nile virus in 2009, and one WNV-positive mosquito pool was detected.

With the continued presence of WNV from year to year, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has acknowledged the virus is established in Ontario, as have many jurisdictions across North America. The WNV dead bird pick-up, testing and reporting program was discontinued across Ontario in 2009.

York Region Public Health will continue to use mosquito surveillance and other factors including temperature, precipitation and time of year to determine the human health risk of WNV in York Region.

The risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito and becoming seriously ill as a result of WNV is low. Approximately four out of five people infected by WNV do not show any symptoms of 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 encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

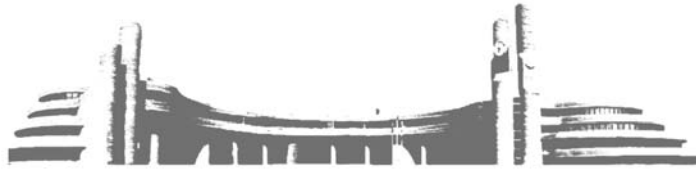
For more information on this or any other public health-related topic, please contact **York Region Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** or **TTY 1-866-252-9933**.

For more information on the Regional Municipality of York and our services, please visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

- 30 -

**Media Contact:** Jennifer Mitchell-Emmerson, Community and Health Services, York Region  
Phone: (905) 830-4444, ext. 4016 or After-hours Cell (905) 716-9753  
Email: [jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca](mailto:jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca)

**Attachment: York Region’s 2010 West Nile virus Control Plan**



Wednesday, April 28, 2010

For Immediate Release

## York Region's 2010 West Nile virus Control Plan

**NEWMARKET** – The York Region West Nile virus (WNV) Control Plan for 2010 includes:

- Public education regarding common sense and effective measures to prevent exposure to WNV
- Mosquito and human surveillance
- WNV control activities including a larviciding strategy:
  - The first larvicide application will be in June and subsequent applications will be in July, August and September. These applications will target all catch basins along regional and municipal roads, as required. Catch basins on private property can also be treated, as requested.
  - Methoprene is the larvicide that will 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 a licensed applicator approved by the Ministry of the Environment. Catch basins which have been treated 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 the catch basin. 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. There are simple and common sense precautions that 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
- Mosquitoes breed in still water – 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

In 2009, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care discontinued the WNV dead bird surveillance program. WNV 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 Public Health will continue to use mosquito surveillance in addition to other factors, including temperature, precipitation and time of year to determine the human health risk of WNV in York Region.

**What to do if you find a dead bird**

- If you find a dead bird, bury the bird two feet deep
- Do not handle dead birds with bare hands or dispose of dead birds through the municipal garbage systems
- When dealing with any found dead wildlife, always wear leak-proof rubber gloves or use two layers of a leak-proof plastic bag inverted over your hand or a stick or shovel to move the bird

There have been no cases of WNV in humans from contact with infected birds when proper precautions were taken.

For more information on this or any other public health-related topic, please contact **York Region Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** or **TTY 1-866-252-9933**.

For more information on the Regional Municipality of York and our services, please visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

- 30 -

**Media Contact:** *Jennifer Mitchell-Emmerson, Community and Health Services, York Region*  
*Phone: (905) 830-4444, ext. 4016 or After-hours Cell (905) 716-9753*  
*Email: [jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca](mailto:jennifer.mitchellemmerson@york.ca)*