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PRESS RELEASE

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Mosquito Surveillance Program Reveals West Nile Virus Risk

Johnson County, Iowa – The Johnson County Public Health Mosquito Surveillance Program, in collaboration with testing from Iowa State University and the University of Iowa Hygienic Lab, have identified a pool of mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile virus (WNV). Mosquito samples from a trap located in Hickory Hill Park recently tested positive, suggesting mosquitoes with the potential to carry West Nile virus are likely present in the community.

This is the first pool of mosquitoes to test positive for West Nile virus in Johnson County, since the surveillance program was reinstated in 2017. No human cases have been reported this season. “Historically, we are near the peak season for mosquito activity and potential WNV transmission,” said James Lacina, Environmental Health Manager at Johnson County Public Health. “Avoiding mosquito bites is the best way to limit the risk of transmission, along with reducing habitat, such as areas of standing water where mosquitoes may breed.”

People can take simple precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

- Use an effective, EPA-registered insect repellent.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors.
- Limit time outside from dusk to dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Mosquito-proof your home by installing or repairing screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitos outside.
- Eliminate mosquito-breeding areas by disposing of standing water from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires, and birdbaths.

West Nile virus is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus is not spread from person to person. Most people who become infected with the virus do not become ill. However, about 20% of infected people will develop West Nile fever. When symptoms occur, they may be mild or severe. Mild symptoms include flu-like illness with fever, headache, body aches, nausea, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach, and back. Symptoms of severe cases of West Nile virus include high fever, neck stiffness, and encephalitis, a swelling of the brain that can lead to coma, convulsions, and death. Less than 1% of infected people will develop severe symptoms. People over the age of 50 and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk of developing severe illness. If you think you have symptoms of West Nile virus, see your doctor right away.

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