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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cheri Nickell, Washburn County Health Officer
715-635-4400

WASHBURN COUNTY BIRD TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

The Washburn County Health Department reports a dead raven found in Washburn County has tested positive for West Nile Virus.

“Dead blue jays, ravens, and crows act as an early warning system for West Nile virus,” said Cheri Nickell, Washburn County Health Officer. “Finding the virus in birds indicates that West Nile virus may be present in the local mosquito population, and residents of Washburn County need to be more vigilant in their personal protective measures to prevent mosquito bites.”

West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes acquire the virus by feeding on infected birds.

“Washburn County residents should be aware of West Nile virus and take some simple steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” Nickell said. “The West Nile virus appears to be here to stay, so the best way to avoid the disease is to reduce exposure to and eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes.”

The Washburn County Health Department recommends the following:

- Limit time spent outside at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing as well as exposed skin since mosquitoes may bite through clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquito entry.
- Properly dispose of items that hold water, such as tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or discarded tires.
- Clean roof gutters and downspouts for proper drainage.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, wading pools, boats, and canoes when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths and pet dishes at least every three days.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas, and hot tubs; drain water from pool covers.
- Trim tall grass, weeds, and vines since mosquitoes use these areas to rest during hot daylight hours.
- Landscape to prevent water from pooling in low-lying areas.

For more information, contact the Washburn County Health Department @ www.health.co.washburn.wi.us or visit the WI Dept. of Health Services website @ <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/arboviral/westnilevirus.htm>