

NEWS RELEASE

August 6, 2008

**MASON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: Mason County crow is first bird to test positive this season on west side of state

A dead crow collected in the Little Egypt Road area of Mason County tested positive for West Nile virus. It's the first West Nile virus detection in Mason County and the west side of our state to this year.

West Nile virus is mainly a bird disease. Mosquitoes feed on infected birds and then can pass the virus to people, horses, and other animals. Bird testing for the virus began on July 1 — so far, 47 birds have been tested statewide. Mason County has sent two birds for testing, both of them were crows. People are encouraged to report dead birds, especially crows, jays, magpies, and ravens, using the [Department of Health's online dead bird reporting system](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WNV/reportdeadbird.html) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WNV/reportdeadbird.html>).

There is no vaccine to prevent West Nile Virus in humans. People should avoid mosquito bites by staying indoors around dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active, ensure door and window screens are working, and use a mosquito repellent when necessary. Always follow label directions when using repellents.

There is a vaccine for horses. Because the virus affects horses, mules, donkeys and other equines much more often than other animals, you should talk to your veterinarian about the West Nile virus vaccine. According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture, most horses infected with the virus do not become ill and show no symptoms at all; about one-third of horses that become ill; some die. Horses that do become ill show signs such as loss of appetite, loss of coordination, confusion, fever, stiffness, muscle tremors, and weakness.

It's important to reduce mosquito habitat around the home. Emptying water from old tires; turning over old buckets or cans; and frequently changing water in pet dishes, birdbaths, and water troughs helps eliminate the small puddles of water in which many mosquito larvae grow.

West Nile virus can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the spinal cord and brain). People over age 50 have the

highest risk for serious illness. There's no specific treatment for West Nile virus infection.

More information on [West Nile virus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/WNV) (www.doh.wa.gov/WNV) is on the Department of Health Web site or contact Debbie Riley at Mason County Public Health at DLR@co.mason.wa.us or by calling (360) 427-9670 EXT 358 or from Belfair (360) 275-4467 EXT 358.

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