

August 31, 2007

Toronto reports first human case of West Nile Virus

Toronto Public Health is reporting the City's first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) for 2007.

Toronto Public Health was advised of a 56 year-old male Toronto resident of midtown Toronto diagnosed with WNV. The individual has not become ill.

In 2006, the first human case of WNV was reported on August 18. So far this year, 11 mosquito pools and one bird have tested positive for the virus in Toronto.

"Though summer is almost over, it's still important to take precautions," said Dr. Rita Shahin, Associate Medical Officer of Health. "Most human cases of West Nile Virus are contracted at this time of year."

The following personal protection measures are recommended:

- use a mosquito repellent containing DEET
- wear light-coloured clothing and cover up in areas where mosquitoes are present
- take precautions, especially in early morning and early evening, when mosquitoes are most active
- repair any holes in door and window screens
- remove standing water around your home.

The City's WNV prevention program includes three components: monitoring for WNV in birds, mosquitoes and people; public education; and treating catch basins and other areas of standing water with larvicide to reduce mosquitoes.

The overall risk of becoming infected with WNV is low. Close to 80 per cent of people bitten by an infected mosquito do not get sick and less than one per cent become seriously ill. Symptoms include stiff neck, confusion, severe headache and sudden sensitivity to light. Some people are at higher risk, especially those over 55 years of age and those with compromised immune systems due to illnesses such as cancer, diabetes or heart disease.

For more information, visit <http://www.toronto.ca/health> or call 416-338-7600.

Toronto is Canada's largest city and sixth largest government, and home to a diverse population of about 2.6 million people. It is the economic engine of Canada and one of the greenest and most creative cities in North America. In the past three years Toronto has won more than 50 awards for quality and innovation in delivering public services. Toronto's government is dedicated to prosperity, opportunity and liveability for all its residents.

- 30 -

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