

Take precautions against West Nile

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

As of Friday, Sept. 7, 51 human cases of West Nile virus had been reported to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

This is a sharp increase over 2011, when there were just seven cases, but significantly below the 578 cases in 2007 and the 2,847 cases in the peak year of 2003.

The 51 cases this year includes two deaths in Montrose County.

Elisabeth Lawaczeck, state public health veterinarian, advises people to continue to take precautions against West Nile virus by wearing insect repellent, draining standing water and using other methods to avoid mosquito bites when outdoors. Typically, West Nile virus season should be winding down now, but mosquitoes that carry the disease still are circulating.

West Nile virus is carried by certain birds and transmitted to people by bites from mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. Female Culex mosquitoes, the species that transmits the virus, usually start emerging in late April or early May and continue transmitting the virus until the first frost, which usually is in September along the Front Range.

Precautions to take against West Nile virus include the “Four D’s”:

—Drain standing water around the house weekly since that’s where mosquitoes lay eggs. Be sure to empty old tires, cans, flowerpots, clogged rain gutters, rain barrels and toys where puddles can occur.

—Dusk and dawn are when mosquitoes that carry the virus are most active, so limit outdoor activities or take precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

—DEET is an effective ingredient to look for in insect repellents. Always follow label instructions

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carefully.

—Dress in long sleeves and pants during dawn and dusk or in areas where mosquitoes are active.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and local public health agencies maintain a website with additional information about West Nile virus at www.FightTheBiteColorado.com

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