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Press Release

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West Nile Infection Contributes to Bingham County Death

West Nile virus may have contributed to the death of a Bingham County man in his 60s. This is the first West Nile related death in a resident of Bingham County, and the eighth Idaho resident to die from complications of West Nile virus in 2006. All of the Idaho resident deaths reported have been in people over the age of 60.

As of Thursday, 616 Idaho residents have tested positive for West Nile virus across southern and central Idaho this year. Symptoms of West Nile infection include headaches, body aches, fever and sometimes a rash. People are advised to call their healthcare provider if symptoms interfere with their daily routine, or are symptoms they would normally call their doctor about.

West Nile virus is spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes; it does not spread by person-to-person contact or from animals to people. Because mosquitoes are the main form of transmission, people are advised to ‘Fight the Bite’ of mosquitoes and:

- Insect-proof their homes by repairing or replacing screens;
- Reduce standing water on their property that provides mosquito breeding habitat, such as bird baths and decorative ponds;
- Cover up exposed skin when outdoors;
- Apply insect repellent approved by the EPA to exposed skin and clothing. Follow instructions on the product label, especially for children;
- Avoid mosquitoes when they are most active at dawn and dusk; and
- Report dead birds and squirrels to your local Fish and Game office.

(more)

West Nile virus does not appear to affect most animals including dogs and cats, but can cause severe illness in horses and certain species of birds. Although there is not a vaccine available for people, there are several vaccines for horses. Approximately one-third of horses which contract West Nile virus will die, so horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their animals. Horse owners who suspect West Nile viral infection in their animal should contact their veterinarian immediately.

Additional information about the virus is available from the Department of Health and Welfare's web site at <http://www.westnile.idaho.gov> is updated everyday. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture's Urban Pest Management program also has information available on steps to prevent home-grown mosquito infestations. This information is available on ISDA's web site at <http://www.idahoag.us>.

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(Editors: For more information, please contact Tom Shanahan at 334-0668, or your District Health Department Public Information Officer.)