

MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

814 Jefferson Ave.
Memphis, Tennessee 38105

Shelby County Reports Probable West Nile Virus Case

**For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, November 5, 2002**

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Memphis, TN. — The Memphis and Shelby County Health Department, in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Health, announced today that there is an additional probable human case of West Nile Virus in Shelby County.

This 93 year- old female became ill in September, currently hospitalized and is considered a probable case of the West Nile Virus. Additional laboratory specimens on this case have been submitted to the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation.

Currently in Shelby County, this makes 39 cases and 4 deaths. Sixteen (16) of the cases are probable (including 2 deaths) and twenty-three (23) of the cases are confirmed (including 2 deaths). In Tennessee total cases are fifty-three (53), with seven (7) deaths. Total probable cases are twenty-one (21) and confirmed cases thirty-two (32). Five (5) deaths from West Nile virus have been confirmed in Tennessee, including the two (2) in Shelby County.

With the onset of cooler temperatures, residents will likely increase their outdoor activities, resulting in a higher risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. We are encouraging all Shelby County residents to continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites.

A reduction in the mosquito population is expected following the first heavy frost, which will reduce West Nile Virus activity in the area. Mosquitoes can become active when temperatures rise above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Though the risk of West Nile Virus transmission is greatly reduced following the first frost, residents should continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites and eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around their homes year-round.

Yvonne S. Madlock, Director of the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department emphasizes, “You are your own best defense against this virus, and we urge citizens to minimize the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes by following precautions to protect themselves from possible exposure to infected mosquitoes, including the safe use of mosquito repellents.”

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Though the virus, which humans catch from infected mosquitoes but not from birds, humans or other animals, can occasionally cause encephalitis, most human infections are mild, resulting in fever, headache and body aches that last only a few days. Symptoms of encephalitis, inflammation of the brain, include a high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma or convulsions. Encephalitis associated with the WNV is rare, but it does occur, and persons over age 50 or with compromised immune systems are at greater risk.

Shelby County citizens are urged to report recent dead crows or blue jays to the WNV Hotline (901) 544-7503. These birds seem more susceptible to the virus and die within a few days of being infected.

For more information regarding the West Nile virus or what you can do around your home or business to reduce mosquito activity, please check out our web site, <http://www.co.shelby.tn.us/>.