



NEWS RELEASE
May 24, 2010

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LAKE COUNTY GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

WEST NILE VIRUS AND RABIES SURVEILLANCE HEAT UP WITH THE WEATHER

Spring kicks off the Lake County General Health District's annual West Nile Virus and Rabies surveillance programs. The public is encouraged to contact the Health District to report if you see a dead bird that was not the victim of a cat, noting the location, date of observation, and species, if known. Birds are no longer being collected and tested for West Nile Virus because of Ohio Department of Health budget cuts, but dead bird locations are mapped to help with monitoring any potential virus activity. Dead birds may be placed in a bag with gloved hands or a shovel and thrown away in the garbage.

Birds act as a host of West Nile Virus, and then mosquitoes become infected by feeding on them. Mosquitoes pass the disease along to humans that are bitten. Residents can help to reduce the number of mosquitoes in their neighborhood. Elimination of potential mosquito breeding sites is as easy as emptying all containers that might hold water and eliminating standing water in your yard. Wear protective clothing when out in the evening and use repellents as needed to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

As warm weather brings people outdoors, it also increases the opportunity to come into contact with stray domestic animals and wild animals. This time of the year, the public is reminded not to touch domestic animals not known to them or any wild animal to avoid being bitten. Encourage children to tell an adult if they have received a bite from any animal. Seek medical attention to treat the wound and report the incident to the Lake County General Health District to assess the risk of potential rabies exposure.

Earlier this spring, the Health District was notified that a skunk infected with raccoon strain rabies was found on the east side of Painesville Township. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services will be working to limit the spread of this dangerous virus. They will be contacting residents in parts of Painesville City, Painesville Township and Perry Township for their permission to Trap, Vaccinate, and Release (TVR) wild animals on their property. Raccoons are captured in cage traps, vaccinated in the same manner as a pet, and released back into their habitat. This project has been successfully conducted in the Mentor and Kirtland areas for the past several years. Pet owners are reminded that rabies vaccinations by a veterinarian for their pet cat, dog or ferret are not only the law in Lake County, but are also the best way to protect the animal and your family from this potentially deadly disease.

Reports of ill, strange-acting, or dead carnivorous mammals, such as raccoons, foxes, skunks, and coyote are valuable. Dead animals will be picked up by the Health District for rabies testing with the cooperation of the USDA Wildlife Services. The Health District may be reached at (440) 350-2543 (Painesville), (440) 918-2543 (Cleveland) or (440) 428-4348 x2543 (Madison) with animal reports or questions.

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