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Red, Bite and Blue: KDHE Recommends Mosquito Bite Prevention Over Fourth of July Holiday

TOPEKA – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recommends Kansans take preventive measures against mosquito bites over the Fourth of July holiday. Floods throughout the state have caused an increase in mosquito populations. Mosquito surveillance in Reno, Sedgwick and Shawnee counties has shown an increase *Culex* species mosquitoes which can transmit West Nile virus and other viruses that can affect humans. This species of mosquitoes is most active at dawn and dusk.

“West Nile virus can be spread to people through bites from infected mosquitoes, but it is not contagious from person to person,” said KDHE Secretary Lee Norman, MD. “Symptoms range from a slight headache and low-grade fever to swelling of the brain or brain tissue and, in rare cases, death.”

Since 2002 there have been 677 cases and 35 deaths in Kansans from West Nile virus. To date, there have been no cases of West Nile virus reported to KDHE in 2019. People who have had West Nile virus before are considered immune. Cases are most common from mid-July through late September.

KDHE has developed West Nile virus risk levels to help guide prevention efforts for both communities and individuals. These risk level reports will be posted weekly at; http://www.kdheks.gov/epi/arboviral_disease.htm. All six regions of Kansas are currently at moderate risk level.

KDHE recommends the following precautions to protect against West Nile virus:

- When you are outdoors, use insect repellent containing an [EPA-registered active ingredient](#) on skin and clothing, including DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Follow the directions on the package.
- Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times or consider staying indoors during these hours.
- The elderly or immunocompromised should consider limiting their exposure outside during dusk and dawn when the *Culex* species mosquitos are most active.
- Make sure you have good screens on your windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out.

- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in bird baths weekly. Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out. Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when they aren't being used.

West Nile virus in horses can be fatal. The virus can cause inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. Approximately 33 percent of horses infected with West Nile virus will die. A West Nile virus vaccine for horses is available and owners are encouraged to vaccinate or booster their animals.

KDHE maintains an Arboviral Disease Surveillance web page that is updated weekly: http://www.kdheks.gov/epi/arboviral_disease.htm. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides this web page with additional information about West Nile virus and preventing mosquito bites: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/StopMosquitoes/>. For questions about West Nile virus or other Arboviral diseases, contact the KDHE Epidemiology hotline at 877-427-7317.