



## **West Nile Virus: Fact Sheet #3**

### **Information for Municipalities**

#### **Introduction**

West Nile virus is carried by infected mosquitoes. A mosquito becomes infected when it feeds on the blood of a bird that is infected with the virus. About two weeks later, the mosquito becomes capable of passing the virus to people and animals by biting them. Of those few people who have become seriously ill from the virus, the majority were over the age of 50 years, or had other chronic debilitating conditions. To date, the virus has not been found in any of the birds in the NWT. However, there are still things that communities can do to prepare for the possibility that a bird, animal or person tests positive for the West Nile virus in their area.

The intention of this document is to provide general guidelines for those involved in preparing for West Nile virus. The following recommendations are based on the available scientific evidence, the experiences and recommendations of other jurisdictions, and the NWT's own situation. Many factors will have to be considered in the final analysis used to make decisions. Information on the West Nile virus is continually growing, and therefore these guidelines will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available.

#### **Enhance Communication**

1. Ensure that information is distributed to the individuals in agencies and organizations who need to be involved in planning. Latest information can be found on the Department of Health and Social Services website at <http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca> and the Health Canada website at [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/wnv-vno/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/wnv-vno/index_e.html).
2. Each municipality has an emergency response plan. The lead contact person in the emergency plan will be contacted by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer should positive finding of West Nile Virus activity be noted around a particular community.
3. Plan for media interest. Media calls about the health issues related to West Nile virus should be referred to the Communications Unit at the Department of Health and Social Services. The municipality should handle calls regarding local response issues.
4. Information about the West Nile virus should be made accessible in a timely manner. Plan ahead of time on how to calls from the public, and heightened demand for information, in partnership with your local community health centre or public health unit.



### **Emphasize Prevention**

1. Reduction of standing water remains the most effective and economical method of providing long-term mosquito control in many areas, particularly those that are man-made.
2. Encourage the reduction of standing water that may collect in backyards, including old tires, children's toys, pet bowls, wading pools, stagnant ponds or flower beds.
3. Emphasize to the public the importance of reducing mosquito bites through the following activities:
  - using mosquito repellent with DEET;
  - reducing the amount of time spent outdoors during peak mosquito hours at dawn and dusk;
  - wearing long sleeved tops and long pants when outdoors; and
  - making sure that door and window screens fit tightly and are free of holes.

### **What are the symptoms of West Nile virus infection?**

At this time, there is an extremely low probability of West Nile virus activity moving north to the NWT. For this reason, the Department of Health and Social Services does not recommend the use of larvicide or adulticide for the purpose of preventing West Nile virus infection. However, any municipality or community planning to implement a mosquito control program using commercial grade pesticides needs a Pesticide Application Permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The use of pesticide products is controlled in the NWT through the *Pesticide Act*. The Act states that no person shall apply a commercial or restricted pesticide on an open body of water or any other area of the NWT unless they hold a valid permit. The Pesticide Regulations describe the information required when applying for either a Pesticide Application Permit or a Pesticide Business Permit. Applications for a Pesticide Application Permit are subject to preliminary screening under the *Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act*.

If the municipality or community hires a pest control company to implement a mosquito control program, that company must have a Pesticide Business Permit. A pesticide application permit is not required for the use of pesticides labeled Domestic.

Copies of the Pesticide Act and regulations can be found at:

<http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/eps/leg.htm>.

For more information on community mosquito control measures, contact Environmental Protection Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources at (867) 873-7654.



**For further information:**

Contact the Office of The Chief Medical Health Officer at (867) 920-8877.

Visit the following websites:

[www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca](http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca) – NWT Department of Health and Social Services

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/wnv-vno/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/wnv-vno/index_e.html) – Health Canada