

## West Nile Virus Expected in Nebraska This Summer

According to Wayne Kramer, Nebraska state medical entomologist, the West Nile Virus (WNV) will likely show up in Nebraska and spread to the Rocky Mountains, or even farther west, in 2002. Kramer spoke at the Urban Pest Management Conference January 17-18 in Lincoln.

In 1999, WNV appeared in New York City and spread rapidly south along the eastern seaboard and westward. By fall 2001, the virus was detected in 27 states, including eastern Iowa and Missouri. Researchers have discovered that more than 80 species of birds, as well as horses, bats, cats, rabbits and humans can be infected by the disease. Crows, jays, magpies and ravens belong to the family Corvidae and are susceptible to the virus and

often die. However, the virus doesn't harm most other species of migrating birds that intermingle in Mexico and Central America during the winter. In 2002, Kramer and other experts believe that birds will carry the virus north and west with their spring migration to states in the great plains, Rocky Mountains and possibly even farther west.

This disease has killed horses and humans. Because this disease is only transmitted by mosquitoes, preventing exposure to mosquitoes will be the key to protecting horses and humans. Eliminating stagnant water sources where mosquitoes breed will be important. Once WNV is confirmed in Nebraska, it may also be useful to vaccinate animals against the disease. A vaccine for horses has been developed, but it is only available in states where the virus has been confirmed.

State and national experts recommend people who spend time outdoors when mosquitoes are active, should protect themselves with a commercially available insect repellent containing DEET. Guidelines for using DEET safely can be found at Nebraska Health and Human Services System website at: [www.hhs.state.ne.us/epi/wnv.htm](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/epi/wnv.htm)

There are several similar viral diseases transmitted by mosquitoes that are found in Nebraska. They include St. Louis Encephalitis, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and Western Equine Encephalitis. There is no evidence that the WNV will be any more virulent or common than these already established diseases. It is likely fatalities from WNV will be relatively rare. (BPO)

## What should you do when you find dead birds?

Wayne Kramer, medical entomologist for the Nebraska Health and Human Services (HHS) System is interested in analyzing dead birds within the State of Nebraska, particularly crows, jays and magpies that often die from the disease. Birds infected with WNV are more likely to be single cases, rather than a whole flock. If you find dead

crows, call Wayne Kramer (402) 471-0506.

- For accurate laboratory analysis, birds must be freshly dead, less than 24 hour old, and in good condition.
- Crows, jays, magpies and related birds are of most interest.
- Even though WNV cannot spread directly from birds to people, use gloves to place the

dead bird in a double plastic bag.

- Label specimen with type of bird, date found and specific address where bird was found, zip code and county.
- Freeze bird or put it on ice.

If birds are not suitable for analysis, use gloves to carefully place dead birds in a double plastic bag and place dead birds in outdoor trash.

## Invasion of the Tiny Mites

On warm, sunny winter days, you may find very tiny reddish to reddish-brown mites crawling around your windows, countertops or floors. These pin-point sized mites sometimes invade homes in large numbers. They squeeze through the tiniest of cracks, especially on the south side of buildings where they have been overwintering.

Clover mites sometimes cause homeowners alarm, but the mites do very little damage inside the home. They do not damage most house plants, they are not interested in people or pets and do not infest your food items. They do not live or breed in the house. Once indoors, clover mites will die pretty quickly.



Clover mites (magnified)

A word of caution: If you squash a clover mite, they leave behind a nasty reddish-brown stain. Care should be taken not to smear clover mites on fabrics — the stains are difficult to remove.

Indoors: Control by using a vacuum cleaner or moist dust cloth. Avoid crushing or smearing the mites, especially on fabrics. A barrier of double sided tape may be useful in preventing mites from entering around windows.

Outdoors: Several options are available for nonchemical and chemical controls depending on the situation and your preference.

For detailed information on controlling clover mites, visit the Lancaster County web site at [www.lancaster.unl.edu](http://www.lancaster.unl.edu). If you do not have access to the internet, call the extension office to receive the free NEBGUIDE *Clover Mites and Their Management (G1131)* (SC)

## Rats (and Mice) ... Did you Know That ...

### Rats and mice:

- run along or climb electrical wires, ropes, cables, vines, shrubs and trees to gain entry to a building.
- climb almost any rough vertical surface, such as wood, brick, concrete and weathered sheet metal.
- gnaw through a wide variety of materials including aluminum sheeting, wood, rubber, vinyl, plastic and concrete block.

### Rats can:

- jump up 36 inches vertically

- and 48 inches horizontally.
- drop 50 feet without serious injury.
- burrow straight down into the ground at least 36 inches.
- swim 1/2 mile in open water, dive through water traps in plumbing and travel in sewer lines against a substantial water current.
- gain entry through holes as small as 1/2 inch in diameter.

### House mice can:

- jump up 18 inches from a floor onto an elevated surface.

- travel considerable distances hanging upside-down from screen wire.
- survive and reproduce at temperatures down to 24 degrees F if adequate food and nesting materials are available.
- gain entry through holes as small as 1/4 inch in diameter.

Information on controlling rodents is available at the Lancaster County Extension Office. Call 441-7180 or visit the Lancaster County Web site at [www.lancaster.unl.edu](http://www.lancaster.unl.edu) (SC)

## Environmental Focus



## Bugs Coming out of Firewood? Don't Panic

Several kinds of small arthropods are often found in firewood, but it would be unusual for any to infest furniture or your house structure. In nature, dead trees and logs are used by a variety of small insects as shelter—living in cracks and crevices in or under the bark. Others may live in the wood itself. When dead trees and logs are cut into small pieces for use as firewood and transported to a home, a number of critters may come along for the ride.

Some arthropods that are found in firewood are sowbugs and pillbugs, millipedes, centipedes and spiders. Insects include wood-boring beetles, wood roaches and silverfish. Termites are never found in firewood stored outside when temperatures are below freezing. Termites typically overwinter in their colony several feet deep in the soil to escape freezing temperatures.

Carpenter ants nest in wood that has gotten wet and started to decay. Firewood that has been stored for several years may house a carpenter ant colony.

Decaying wood makes poor firewood. Wood that has been stored on the ground may become infested with termites during warmer months of the year. You can burn this wood during the winter, but it is likely to be light and burn too fast.

Wood boring beetles leaving firewood are not likely to infest your home. There are many species of wood boring beetles than may infest wood, and they range from 1 1/2 inch to 1/8 inch long. Often these beetles (or their larval stage) leave the wood after it is cut; some may die as the wood starts to dry out.

If insects start to emerge from your firewood, do not panic! Get out the vacuum cleaner and sweep 'em up. Insecticide treatment of firewood is definitely not recommended because dangerous fumes may arise when you burn the wood.

The best way to eliminate a potential insect problem is to keep the firewood outside or in an unheated garage until you get ready to burn it. And, only store or buy enough wood that you will burn in one season. (BPO)

### Discover a New Hobby!

## Beginning Beekeeping Workshop



**March 18 and 19, 6:30–9:30 p.m.**

Lancaster Extension Education Center

**April 6, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Optional apiculture lab, Agricultural Research and Development Center, near Mead

### Learn to:

- manage honey bees by understanding their biology and behavior
- identify the best Nebraska honey plants
- locate hives for best survival and production
- install packaged bees
- manage honey bee diseases
- harvest honey and beeswax
- prepare your crop for market

Cost: \$20

**Call Barb Ogg at 441-7180 for more information.**