

Protect Yourself from West Nile Virus by Controlling Mosquitoes

The recent rains are a relief, but because standing water breeds mosquitoes, people should take precautions now to protect themselves against the West Nile Virus disease. West Nile Virus affects birds, horses and people but is *only* transmitted by mosquitoes. It is not spread by person-to-person contact.

A bite from an infected mosquito will not always make you sick; most people infected with West Nile Virus either have no symptoms or experience mild illness. Exposure to a mosquito carrying the West Nile Virus makes anyone susceptible, but people at greatest risk are those more than 50 years old and people who are immunocompromised.

There currently is no vaccine for West Nile Virus for humans, although one exists for horses.

Because West Nile Virus is transmitted by mosquitoes, the key to protecting yourself from West Nile Virus is to control mosquitoes and to avoid being bitten by them. The best way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate sites where mosquitoes breed. Tips include:

- Eliminate standing water on your property because mosquitoes will breed in any puddle existing for more than four days.
- Properly discard used tires and children's toys that catch water and serve as a breeding ground. Turn over plastic wading pools and wheel barrows when not in use.
- Empty bird baths and refill at least weekly to interrupt the mosquito breeding cycle.
- Dispose of empty tin cans, paint containers, flower pots and other similar containers that have accumulated on your property.
- Clogged roof gutters can be a breeding site for mosquitoes; they should be checked periodically for proper drain-



Photo courtesy of CDC

Culex mosquito laying eggs

- age.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish.
- Control mosquito larvae in standing ponds with mosquito "dunks" containing Bt, which specifically kills mosquito larvae but is safe for birds and wildlife. These products can be purchased at local home and garden stores.
- Trim shrubs and mow tall grass close to your home because they provide excellent resting sites for adult mosquitoes.

The second way to protect yourself is to try to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Avoid mosquito-infested areas or stay indoors when mosquitoes are most active. Most mosquitoes are active two to three hours before and after dark, though one mosquito, the Asian tiger mosquito, is active during the day. Other tips include:

- Wear light-colored clothing, long-sleeved shirts and slacks when working outdoors, especially during months when mosquitoes are active or when working in infested areas.
- Use a personal repellent containing DEET. Studies have shown DEET repellents are more effective than other

products currently available. Read and follow label directions when using DEET. Use repellents sparingly, and use the lowest concentration, especially on children. It is generally recommended persons should use products that contain 30 percent or less DEET. For children, it is best to be conservative and keep the concentration of DEET at 10 percent or less. In many situations, it may make sense to spray clothing, but be aware DEET can damage plastics, leather and synthetic fabrics like rayon.

- Avoid or use colognes and perfumes sparingly. These, together with other gases such as carbon dioxide emitted during physical exertion, attract mosquitoes.
- Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension has recently released an educational resource, *West Nile Virus — Getting Prepared*. This publication is available at the Lancaster County Extension office, 444 Cherrycreek Road, or online at lancaster.unl.edu. (BPO)

Head Lice Videotape in English, Spanish and Arabic!

Kids are back in school and it's head lice season. There is help for families trying to cope with this problem.

UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County's award-winning head lice videotape, "Removing Head Lice Safely," has been translated into Arabic and Spanish.

All three versions can now be viewed on the Internet at www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/video.htm. This fall, these videotapes will also be aired on City 5 TV cable channel on Mondays, 12:30 and 5:30 p.m.; Tues-



days, 5 p.m.; Saturday, 12:30 p.m. and Sundays, 3 p.m.

Written educational resources (also available in English, Arabic and Spanish) are online at lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/Lice.htm or may be picked up at Lancaster County

Extension, 444 Cherrycreek Rd., Lincoln.

The videotapes and written information emphasize combing to remove lice and nits. These resources are being used by many schools, including Lincoln Public Schools, who have reported the number of head lice cases have declined by 60 percent from 2,697 cases ('98-'99) to 1,091 ('01-'02).

For more information about head lice or to purchase videotapes (available for \$10 + shipping), contact UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County at 441-7180. (BPO)

Environmental Focus



Recycle Used Oil!

The Nebraska Used Oil Collection and Reuse Program promotes the recycling of oil. Used oil collected through the program will be reused, recovered for energy, used in asphalt applications or re-refined.

Why Collect Used Oil?

State law (LB1257) banned disposal of waste oil in landfills back in 1994. There is a need to prevent soil, surface water and groundwater in Nebraska from possible contamination from used oil.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, used oil is responsible for approximately 40 percent of the pollution in rivers and streams. A gallon of used oil can ruin one million gallons of fresh water — a year's supply for 50 people.

Used oil that is improperly disposed of on roads, along fence lines or released into the air or through burning, is a pollutant because toxic metals such as lead, cadmium, and arsenic are released into the environment. The oil can contaminate surface and groundwater.

What Happens to Collected Oil?

Used oil can be used as a fuel resource. One gallon of used oil can be used to generate 98 kilowatt-hours of electricity. Used oil has nearly twice the energy-producing value of coal. It's also a valuable resource when cleaned of its impurities and re-refined. Several national brands have been successfully marketed as premium recycled motor oils. Recycling used oil back into clean lubricating oil takes only one-half to one-fourth as much energy as refining from crude oil.

What Will be Accepted?

- Spent oil from gasoline and diesel engines
- Spent refrigerant lubricating oil
- Spent lubricating oil from aircraft reciprocating and jet engines
- Spent hydraulic fluid
- Spent heat transfer fluids
- Spent transmission fluid
- Cutting oils

see *USED OIL* on page 11

Fall Cleaning?

Take advantage of these household hazardous waste collection days

DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Sat., Sept. 21 9 a.m.—3 p.m.	Pfizer Inc. 601 W. Cornhusker Highway
Sat., Oct. 19 9 a.m.—3 p.m.	Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department 3140 N Street
Sat., Nov. 16 9 a.m.—3 p.m.	State Fair Park 4-H Youth Complex

ITEMS THAT YOU CAN BRING FOR DISPOSAL

- Heavy metals: items containing mercury such as thermometers and thermostats.
- Solvents: mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints, varnishes, stains, polishes and waxes.
- Pesticides: weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, roach powder, rat poisons. You may also bring EPA banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex, PCP and Dursban.
- PCB's: Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures and capacitors from old appliances including radios, motors and televisions.

Leave products in their *original* container and keep the label intact. Open, leaking or rusted containers should be placed in a clear plastic bag during transport. Do not mix chemicals.

DO NOT BRING: latex paint, medicines, explosives or ammunition, fertilizers, used oil, general household trash, antifreeze or batteries.

These collections are for households only; not businesses. Only residents of Lincoln and Lancaster County can bring items to collections. For more specific information, call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040.