

NEWS RELEASE

September 5, 2025

For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager, 308-345-4223

Time to Protect Against West Nile Virus

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) was notified of two more groups of mosquitoes that have tested positive for West Nile Virus. This is a time to take extra care to protect yourself from mosquito bites. This is the fourth group of mosquitoes to test positive this year in Red Willow County. The last time more than 2 groups of mosquitoes tested positive for West Nile in southwest Nebraska was in 2018.

Most people who get infected with West Nile do not have any symptoms, however, occasionally West Nile Virus can cause severe illness. There is no vaccine against West Nile for humans. The most common symptoms are fever, body aches, and fatigue that can last for weeks or months. Less often, people develop severe illness such as swelling in the brain or spinal cord leading to weakness, paralysis, or death.

“West Nile Virus only spreads when a mosquito carrying the virus bites a person, horse, or other animal,” explains Sarah Minnick, Program Manager for SWNPHD. “This means the best protection from West Nile is to prevent mosquito bites.”

The following tips can be used to help prevent the spread of West Nile:

- Apply an EPA approved repellent like DEET before spending time outside.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, especially if you will be out during dawn and dusk.
- Check your property for standing water and remove or drain it.
- Use mosquito dunks in standing water that cannot be drained, such as birdbaths, ponds, troughs, or other water sources. These products are safe for animals, birds, fish, and people.
- Vaccinate horses in the spring.
- House horses indoors during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Avoid turning on lights in the barn and use incandescent bulbs around the perimeter of the stable.

SWNPHD provides information about possible West Nile in the health district by trapping mosquitoes and sending them in for testing. The public is notified of any mosquito pools that test positive for West Nile, and any positive cases in humans or horses. Horse owners should contact their veterinarian for additional information.

For questions about West Nile Virus call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223 or visit [cdc.gov/westnile](https://www.cdc.gov/westnile). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

###