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Health Officials Encourage Everyone to Protect Themselves from Mosquitoes.

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The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has reported 29 total confirmed human cases of West Nile virus in 2014. DHH also Confirms the State's Second West Nile Virus Death this Year.

Health Officials Confirm 14 New West Nile virus Cases this Week; again, 29 Total Confirmed Cases so far in Year 2014.

DHH issues a weekly Arbovirus Surveillance Report that details cases detected thus far by parish. This week's new infections include neuroinvasive disease cases in Caddo (3), East Baton Rouge (2), Ascension (1) and Livingston (1) parishes. There were also new cases of West Nile fever reported from Caddo (3), Bossier (1) and Tangipahoa (1) parishes, and asymptomatic cases in Caddo (1) and Livingston (1) parishes. The three cases were recently confirmed in Livingston Parish and were all asymptomatic, meaning these individuals did not know they were infected, and only found out while donating blood or having blood work.

Health officials characterize West Nile infections three ways: neuroinvasive, West Nile fever and asymptomatic. A neuroinvasive disease illness is caused by West Nile virus attacking the nerve cells. In older people, it may be very severe and could result in brain damage or death. West Nile fever is less severe, with most people only suffering mild, flu-like symptoms. Asymptomatic individuals were never ill and

were only discovered to have the West Nile virus in their blood when blood work was done for some other reason, such as blood donation.

About 90 percent of all cases are asymptomatic, while about 10 percent will develop West Nile fever. Only a very small number of infected individuals will show the serious symptoms associated with the neuroinvasive disease. Residents who are 65 years old and older are at higher risk for complications, but everyone is at risk for infection.

"These three infections serve as reminders that West Nile virus is here and all residents are at risk," said Dr. Raoult Ratard, State Epidemiologist. "Everyone should take simple steps to protect themselves, their families and their homes from mosquitoes, which spread West Nile virus to humans when they bite. Protection is as simple as wearing mosquito repellent and covering your skin. You can also prevent mosquitoes from reproducing by dumping standing water from containers around your home."

Protecting Yourself

- If you will be outside, you should wear a mosquito repellent containing DEET. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that repellents should contain no more than 30% DEET when used on children. Insect repellents also are not recommended for children younger than 2 months. CDC recommends that you always follow the recommendations appearing on the product label when using repellent.
- Avoid peak mosquito activity times of dusk and dawn.
- Apply repellent on exposed skin and clothing. Do not apply under your clothes.
- To apply repellent to your face, spray on your hands and then rub on your face.
- Adults should always apply repellent to children.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors for long periods of time.
- Avoid perfumes and colognes when outdoors for extended periods of time.
- Make sure that your house has tight-fitting windows and doors, and that all screens are free of holes.

- Reduce the mosquito population by eliminating standing water around your home, which is where mosquitoes breed.
- Dispose of tin cans, ceramic pots and other unnecessary containers that have accumulated on your property. Turn over wheelbarrows, plastic wading pools, buckets, trash cans, children's toys or anything that could collect water.
- Drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers. Drainage holes that are located on the container sides collect enough water for mosquitoes to breed.
- Check and clean roof gutters routinely. They are often overlooked, but can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens can become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended by a family for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware that mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on swimming pool covers.