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TO: Grant County Media

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## **West Nile Virus Returns to Grant County**

MOSES LAKE, WA – Grant County Mosquito Control District #1 (GCMCD#1) has reported that a mosquito sample collected west of Moses Lake has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV), making it the first detection of the virus in Grant County this season. GCMCD#1 covers the Greater Moses Lake area, including the Moses Lake Sand Dunes and Potholes. For more information about GCMCD#1 and to see the boundaries of the district, visit their website: [www.gcmcd1.org](http://www.gcmcd1.org). This positive sample is an indication that WNV is present in this area and potentially other areas of Grant County. The first WNV-positive mosquito sample statewide was identified a month ago in Yakima County.

During the 2015 season, four humans, seven horses and 107 mosquito samples were found to be infected with WNV, making it the most active season for WNV since it was first detected in Grant County almost a decade ago.

There are no reports of human or other animal cases so far this year, however, detection of WNV in the mosquito population means there is a potential for the spread of the virus to humans and other vulnerable species. “The presence of WNV in local mosquitoes is a sign that our residents and guests can be infected, therefore we all need to take steps to prevent mosquito bites,” said Amber McCoy, Environmental Health Specialist, Grant County Health District.

The risk of getting West Nile virus is low, but anyone can become infected. People over 50 years of age have the highest risk of serious illness. Most people who are infected with West Nile virus will not get sick. About 1 in 5 people infected will have mild symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches. Even fewer, about 1 in 150 people infected, will have more severe symptoms including encephalitis. Contact your healthcare provider if you have symptoms of a possible West Nile virus infection, especially if you recently had mosquito bites. Severe symptoms may include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis and coma.

**It is important to protect yourself by avoiding mosquitoes.** Take these steps to prevent mosquito bites and reduce the places where mosquitoes breed around your home:

- Stay indoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are the most active.
- Wear a long sleeve shirt, long pants, and a hat when going into mosquito-infested areas, such as wetlands or wooded areas.
- Use mosquito repellent. Read the label and carefully follow instructions. Take special care when using repellent on children. Mosquito repellents that contain the active ingredients DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus work best.
- Make sure windows and doors are “bug tight” and repair or replace screens as needed.



- Eliminate mosquito-breeding areas around your home by emptying or discarding anything that holds standing water—bottles, cans, old tires, buckets, plastic covers, and toys. Change water in birdbaths, fountains, kiddie pools, and animal troughs at least twice each week. Make sure roof gutters drain properly; and clean clogged gutters in the spring and fall and fix leaky outdoor faucets and sprinklers.

Other species at risk for WNV infection are birds and horses. Certain wild birds including crows, ravens, magpies, jays and raptors are especially vulnerable. Sightings of these types of dead birds could be an indication of WNV. You can report a dead bird online by calling the Grant County Health District at 509-766-7960.

Horses are especially at risk for WNV and many of those infected die or have to be euthanized. Horse owners are urged to vaccinate their horses and keep those vaccinations up to date. There is no human vaccine to protect against WNV.

For more information about West Nile Virus in Washington State visit:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/WestNileVirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/WestNileVirus)

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