



## STEPHENSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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*Building a Healthy Community*

[www.stephensonhealth.com](http://www.stephensonhealth.com)

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### **Press Release FIRST WEST NILE VIRUS-POSITIVE BIRD IN STEPHENSON COUNTY IN 2010**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Tuesday, May 25, 2010

Freeport, IL – The Stephenson County Health Department (SCHD) reports today that a dead house sparrow collected in central Freeport on May 20 has been confirmed positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). Other WNV-positive birds have already been found in Illinois this season in neighboring Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties, as well as in St. Clair and Greene Counties.

To date this season, SCHD has tested six birds, but this is the first one confirmed WNV-positive. SCHD Sanitarian Beth Gilmour will be setting out six mosquito traps throughout the county this week: two in Freeport, and one in each of the communities of Lena, Pearl City, Orangeville, and Dakota. The normal sequence of WNV-positives is birds, then mosquitoes, and finally, humans, according to Public Health Administrator Craig Beintema. He also indicated that it's a bit unusual to see WNV activity this early in

the summer. “In general, you’d expect to see West Nile Virus toward the end of the summer and into the early fall,” Beintema said.

West Nile Virus is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. Most people with the virus have no clinical symptoms of illness, but some may become ill three to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Only about two people in 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness, which is usually mild, and includes fever, headache, and body aches, but serious illnesses, such as encephalitis and meningitis, and even death are possible. People over the age of 50 have the highest risk of severe West Nile disease.

Beintema added that the best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

1. Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn. Use prevention methods whenever mosquitoes are present.
2. When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
3. Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
4. Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including stagnant water in bird baths, ponds, flowerpots, wading pools, old tires,

and any other receptacles. In communities where there are organized mosquito control programs, contact your municipal government to report areas of stagnant water in roadside ditches, flooded yards, and similar locations that may produce mosquitoes.

Additional information about West Nile Virus can be found on the IDPH web site @

[www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/wnv.htm).