



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Idaho Public Health Districts

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September 2014

## West Nile Virus Numbers Decrease in Idaho in 2014

As summer fades and cooler fall weather eases in throughout Idaho, protecting against mosquitos may not be at the forefront of minds when recreating outdoors – though it should remain a priority.

Typically, West Nile Virus (WNV)-positive mosquitos are detected in the summer months; however, warm fall weather can be inviting for mosquitos to stick around. Only with a hard frost will the risk disappear for the season.

### What is West Nile Virus?

WNV is transmitted to people, birds, and other animals by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus can cause serious illness in people of any age, but especially in people over the age of 50 or those with other underlying medical conditions.

There are no medications or vaccine to prevent WNV infection in humans. The majority of people who are infected with WNV might not know it as they don't develop any symptoms. However, one in five people infected with WNV will develop a fever and other symptoms. Less than one percent of these infected people develop a serious, sometimes fatal, neurologic illness.

### WNV in Idaho this Year

So far this year, 16 human WNV cases have been reported throughout Blaine, Canyon, Gem, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Payette, Twin Falls, and Washington counties -- down from 40 reported cases last year in Idaho. Lincoln County has experienced the highest volume of human cases, with four reported. Evidence of WNV in horses, birds, or mosquitos has appeared in

northern, western, and southern counties of the state. Among human cases this year, 54 percent were male with an average age of 50. There have not been any deaths associated with WNV this year.

### WNV and the Role of Local Public Health

Idaho's seven local public health (LPH) districts play a main role in educating the public on ways to protect themselves from various illnesses, including WNV. In addition, since human cases of WNV infection are reportable in Idaho, LPH works to track cases within their jurisdictions. "We have conversations with those who have become infected and we ask them a series of questions about mosquito exposure – among them, whether they've traveled around the state and do they remember being bitten by mosquitos while outside. These are just some of the questions we'll ask to help with our disease tracking," said Kimberly Link, Communicable Disease Control Program Manager for Central District Health Department. This information helps mosquito abatement districts make smarter decisions about where to focus their trapping and spraying efforts for maximum results. Using the mosquito testing results and human case reports helps pinpoint locations where WNV is increasing. Then the abatement district can respond appropriately, warning the public and targeting the pesky, sometimes deadly, problem.

For more information on WNV in Idaho, and a seasonal WNV tracker maintained by Idaho Health and Welfare, visit [www.westnile.idaho.gov](http://www.westnile.idaho.gov).



## HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

PANHANDLE HEALTH DISTRICT (1)	PUBLIC HEALTH - IDAHO NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT (2)	SOUTHWEST DISTRICT HEALTH (3)	CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH (4)	SOUTH CENTRAL PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT (5)	SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO PUBLIC HEALTH (6)	EASTERN IDAHO PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT (7)
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