

West Nile and Your Back Yard

Compared to the states around us Wisconsin had significantly less cases of West Nile in the humans and horses in 2002. It is impossible to predict what will happen in 2003.

What we do know is the most important mosquitoes in the spread of West Nile Virus can breed in your own back yard. The biggest concern for disease transmission includes the container breeding mosquitoes in the genus Culex. They breed on tin cans, old tires, bird baths, storm sewers, polluted waters and open septic systems. Culex mosquitoes can go through multiple generations and adults show a preference for feeding on birds. They can go through a generation in 10-14 days. These mosquitoes fly only short distance from where they breed, but will readily come indoors. This group is important for the transmission of St. Louis Encephalitis, Western Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus.

What can you do? Prevent breeding by dumping bird baths, wading pools, and flower pots that contain water once a week. Remove water collecting objects like pails and tires. Make sure gutters are not clogged and holding water. Drain unused swimming pools.

If there is an outbreak, taking personal protection to prevent mosquito bites is the most important. Wear long sleeves and long pants, use mosquito repellents and limit time outdoors during the dusk and dawn -which are the peak activity times for these mosquitoes. This is far more important than sprays or mosquito fogs. For more information see information sheet on the West Nile Virus at <http://www.ncpmc.org/newsalerts/westnilevirus.html>