



Perth District Health Unit

653 West Gore Street
Stratford, Ontario N5A 1L4
519-271-7600 Fax 519-271-2195
www.pdhu.on.ca

June 4, 2012

Dear Outdoor Organization,

The weather is heating up, which means it's time to start thinking about West Nile virus (WNV) again. The Health Unit is beginning its campaign to educate the public about WNV along with other diseases spread by insects or arthropods, such as Lyme disease and Eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV). These infections have the potential to make people very sick and therefore it is important you protect your employees and your patrons.

What is West Nile Virus?

WNV is a disease that is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. Evidence shows that many people infected with West Nile virus have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. People with weaker immune systems and people with chronic diseases are at greater risk for serious health effects.

What is EEEV?

EEEV is also a mosquito-borne infection that was first detected in Ontario mosquitoes in 2009.

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is an infection spread by the bite of blacklegged ticks (formerly called deer ticks). In Ontario, blacklegged ticks are more commonly found in rural areas along the north shores of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River.

How You Can Help!

Included in this package is information to display at your organization and some reminders about how people can protect themselves from these infections.

Patrons and outdoor staff can protect themselves from exposure to mosquitoes that may be carrying WNV by:

- * Using insect repellent when outdoors; a repellent with DEET offers the most effective protection. Remember to follow label recommendations
- * Wearing protective clothing (light-coloured clothes, long pants, long sleeves, socks)
- * Trying to avoid outdoor activities when mosquitoes are most active, from dusk to dawn.

Ideas to promote the health of your patrons:

- * Supply mosquito repellent containing DEET
- * Give out WNV information with customer receipts
- * Request a WNV display from the Perth District Health Unit.

Ideas for employers to protect your outdoor workers:

- * Include West Nile virus protection in Occupational Health and Safety planning and orientation for new/seasonal employees
- * Provide or recommend personal protective equipment (pants, long sleeve shirt, etc.) and insect repellent as necessary
- * Attach information to employee pay stubs and/or cheques.

Reduce Breeding Grounds

It is also very important to reduce or eliminate standing water on your premises. Standing water allows mosquitoes to live and breed. Examples of standing water locations include but are not limited to: depressions in the ground, birdbaths, flowerpots, wheelbarrows, and empty containers. Remove standing water at least once a week.

Please note: The Perth District Health Unit is not conducting the (WNV) dead bird surveillance program. If you find a dead wild animal of any type and would like it tested please call the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre at the following number:
1-866-673-4781.

If you would like to receive resources on any of these diseases, please call Health Line at 519-271-7600 ext 267 or toll-free at 1-877-271-7348 ext 267. **Information is also available on our website at: www.pdhu.on.ca .**

Thank you for your help in protecting the health of your employees and your patrons.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Carlisle BSc, BASc, CPHI(C)
Public Health Inspector