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For Immediate Release

West Nile Virus Confirmed in a Dead Bird from Reading

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The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced today the first West Nile virus (WNV) positive bird of 2008 in Reading.

In 2007, 3059 dead birds were reported to MDPH and forty-three tested positive for WNV. None of the birds submitted by Reading in 2007 were positive for WNV.

While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe infection. WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito infected with the virus.

People have an important role to play in monitoring for WNV and protecting themselves and their loved ones.

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours** - The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning. Otherwise, take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing.
- **Clothing Can Help** reduce mosquito bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Apply Insect Repellent** when you go outdoors. Use a repellent with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or **IR3535** (Chemical Name: 3-[N-Butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid, ethyl ester) according to the instructions on the product label. *DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age* and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin.

Eliminate mosquito breeding places

- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or getting rid of items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- Some mosquitoes like to come indoors. Keep them outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.
- Tires should be disposed of properly or stored inside.
- Rubbish barrels, buckets, wheelbarrows and small boats should be covered or stored upside down.
- The water in wading pools and birdbaths should be changed once a week.
- Infrequently used pools should be covered or properly maintained.
- Barrels used by gardeners to collect rainwater should be emptied once a week or treated with products containing **Bti** (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*) or **methoprene**.

Report Dead Birds

- **Dead crows or blue jays** may be a sign that WNV is circulating among the birds and mosquitoes in an area. Call 1-866-MASS WNV to report a dead bird. By reporting dead birds, you can play an important role in monitoring WNV.

Further Information

While the Reading Health Division continues to work closely with the MDPH and other agencies, locally we are spraying for adult mosquitoes, treating catch basins. Additional West Nile Virus information can be found at our website: www.readingma.gov/Pages/ReadingMA_Health/index

Information about WNV and reports of WNV activity in Massachusetts during 2008 can be found on the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph under A for Arbovirus in the “Health Topics A to Z” index. Recorded information about WNV is also available by calling the MDPH Public Health Information Line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968).