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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WEST NILE VIRUS SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE IN WESTCHESTER**

With the advent of cooler weather in our area, the Westchester County Department of Health today informed residents that the West Nile Virus season is drawing to a close and that Health Department services pertaining to West Nile virus will be reduced.

To date, there have been 4295 information and reporting calls made to the Westchester County Department of Health's West Nile virus Information line in 2001. There have been a total of 32 West Nile positive birds found in Westchester County this year. 1,919 dead birds have been reported, including 121 birds submitted for testing by the State Health Department since January 2001. Seven mosquito pools from Westchester County have tested positive for West Nile virus this season. A total of 207 mosquito pools have been collected and submitted for testing. No human cases of West Nile virus have been detected in the County this year or last year.

The Westchester County Department of Health will be limiting the services available through the Health Department Information line (914) 813-5609. Due to the reduction of mosquito activity, the Health Department has experienced a significant decline in the volume of calls received through the information line. Residents may report dead birds or potential mosquito breeding grounds by calling the main line of the Health Department during normal working hours at (914) 813-5000. A wealth of information on West Nile Virus can still be found on the Department's website, [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

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“Although we are entering the autumn season, we may still experience some warmer weather conducive to mosquito activity,” stated Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “Therefore, it is still important that everyone continue to eliminate sources of standing water from around their homes and take personal protective measures against mosquito bites.”

Residents are encouraged to continue to report to the Health Department any dead birds they have found for tracking purposes. “Dead birds, especially crows, seem to be a good indication of the presence of West Nile Virus in a community. Residents who report information about dead birds are performing a valuable service, as this will provide us with vital tracking information year round,” stated Dr. Lipsman.

The following strategies are recommended to reduce mosquito breeding sites:

- Remove outside objects such as empty buckets, old tires, and any other containers in which water accumulates and where mosquitoes may breed.
- If receptacles capable of holding water cannot be removed, they should be emptied, turned over, covered, or have holes drilled in the bottom so that water cannot collect in them.
- Clean and empty water from clogged roof gutters.
- Change the water in birdbaths at least twice weekly.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor spas and hot tubs.
- Drain water from pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate stagnant water that collects on your property; clean up leaf litter and similar organic debris.

Personal protection measures to take against mosquito bites include:

- Using insect repellants with no more than 30% DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when outdoors for extended periods of time. Use 10% or less DEET for children. Do not use DEET on infants. Insect repellants should be used during the time of year (April through October) and at dusk and evening hours when mosquitoes are most likely to bite. Be sure to read and follow the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Wearing protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks when outdoors for extended periods of time.