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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLUE JAY FOUND IN NEW ROCHELLE TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS
County Has No Plans to Spray

The Westchester County Department of Health was notified today by the New York State Department of Health that a blue jay found in New Rochelle on August 20th has tested positive for West Nile virus. There are no plans to conduct ground spraying anywhere in Westchester County as a result of this finding.

With the addition of the West Nile positive blue jay, there have been a total of eight West Nile positive birds found in Westchester County this year. To date, there have been 85 birds collected in Westchester County that have been submitted to the State Health Department for testing since January 2001. In addition, no positive mosquitoes or human cases of West Nile Virus have been detected in the County.

“Since West Nile virus has been present in Westchester County in both 1999 and 2000, it comes as no surprise that we are seeing evidence of the virus in our area again this year,” said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “In response to this finding, the Health Department will increase its surveillance of dead birds and mosquitoes, mosquito breeding sites, and larviciding in the area in which this positive bird was found,” Dr. Lipsman added.

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“Basically, this bird serves as a reminder that West Nile virus is still here and that it is important for everyone to eliminate all sources of standing water from around their homes and to take precautions against mosquito bites,” continued Dr. Lipsman.

The Health Department is encouraging residents to report dead birds through its West Nile Virus Information Line at (914) 813-5609. The Health Department will not be collecting dead birds from the public this year for testing, but would still like the public to report information about where dead birds are being 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,” 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.

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- Wearing protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks when outdoors for extended periods of time.

A wealth of information on West Nile virus can be found on the Health Department's website www.westchestergov.com/health and on the Department's West Nile Virus Information Line at (914) 813-5609.

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