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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Crow Found in North Castle Tests Positive for West Nile Virus

The Westchester County Department of Health today received notification from the New York State Health Department that a crow found in the town of North Castle on July 30th has tested positive for the West Nile Virus. There are no plans to conduct ground spraying anywhere in Westchester County as a result of this finding.

This is the second confirmation of West Nile Virus in a bird in Westchester County this year. The infected crow is the second positive bird among 54 birds collected in Westchester County and submitted to the State Health Department since January 2001. In addition, no positive mosquitoes or human cases of West Nile Virus have been detected in the County.

“Considering that West Nile virus has been present in Westchester County in 1999 and 2000, this finding is not unexpected,” said Joshua Lipsman M.D., M.P.H., Westchester County Commissioner of Health. “Westchester County has been preparing for this eventuality for months. The Health Department will increase its surveillance of dead birds and mosquitoes in that area,” he added.

“Basically, this positive crow 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.

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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 West Nile Virus Information Line which can be reached by calling (914) 813-5609.

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