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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FIRST HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY THIS YEAR
FIRST HORSE IN WESTCHESTER TO DIE WITH WEST NILE VIRUS
No Spraying Planned; Surveillance Increased**

The Westchester County Department of Health was notified late yesterday that a 74-year-old woman from Yonkers has tested positive for West Nile virus. The woman was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit in a New York City hospital on Sunday. This is the first identified human case in a Westchester County resident this year. A horse from Eastchester has also died with West Nile virus - the first horse in Westchester since West Nile virus emerged in 1999. Although no spraying is planned at this time, increased vigilance against West Nile virus is urged.

In response to these findings and in the wake of Hurricane Isabel, the Westchester County Department of Health reminds residents that this is the peak season for West Nile virus.

“We all remember that in the wake of Hurricane Floyd in 1999, we had our first outbreak of West Nile virus with 9 human cases and one death. Standing water from Hurricane Isabel, and predicted warm temperatures this coming weekend make for ideal conditions for mosquito breeding. Residents are urged to get rid of standing water and take precautions against mosquito bites,” stated Dr. Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health.

The Health Department will be conducting additional local environmental assessment including monitoring in the area of the woman's home for potential mosquito breeding grounds, checking the status of larvicide in and around Yonkers, conducting additional mosquito trapping in the area, and obtaining detailed information about the travel history of the affected individual. The Health Department is also conducting inspections at horse stables and notifying stable owners to be attentive to mosquito problems in and around their

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facilities. A review of the Health Department's mosquito and bird surveillance data also is being conducted.

Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman again urged residents to take personal protection measures against mosquito bites while in their homes and when spending time outdoors. "It is particularly important that residents remain vigilant in their efforts to reduce their risk of West Nile virus during the last of summer because this is peak mosquito season," said Dr. Lipsman. Dr. Lipsman recommends that residents take the following personal protection measures against mosquito bites:

- Consider avoiding outdoors activities in places and during times where and when mosquitoes are active and feeding.
- Use insect repellants with no more than 30% DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) when outdoors in such areas at those times. Use 10% or less DEET for children. Do not use DEET on infants. Insect repellants should be used especially at dusk and evening hours when mosquitoes are most likely to bite. Be sure to read and follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks when outdoors in areas and at times where and when mosquitoes are active and feeding.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.

Mosquitoes capable of carrying West Nile virus lay their eggs in stagnant water. The eggs can develop in any pool or puddle of water that stands undisturbed for more than four days. Mosquitoes will breed in any untreated water, so the County Health Department recommends doing the following around your home:

- Rid your property of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers
- Remove discarded tires
- Drill holes in the bottoms of all recycling containers that are left outdoors
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use
- Change the water in birdbaths at least twice weekly
- Sweep your driveway after it rains so that it is free of puddles
- Keep storm drains and gutters clear of leaves and debris

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- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor spas and hot tubs and drain water that collects on their covers.

Under County Executive Andy Spano's mosquito control program, *Operation Mosquito S.T.I.N.G.* (Stop The Insect's Next Generation), the County has applied larvicide to catch basins countywide to kill immature mosquitoes and have been collecting mosquitoes and dead birds for testing.

Since West Nile virus is in the area, it is important that residents take precautions against being bitten by mosquitoes and help to eliminate standing water in their neighborhoods that can serve as mosquito breeding sites. The Health Department is encouraging residents to report large areas of standing water through its Public Health Information Line at (914) 813-5609 and through its internet site, www.westchestergov.com/health.

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