

# Umatilla County Health Department

## **NEWS RELEASE**

October 13, 2006

*For Immediate Release*

Contact: Genni Lehnert, Administrator  
Umatilla County Public Health Division  
(541)278-5432

Ron Montgomery, Manager  
West Umatilla Vector Control District  
(541)567-5201

Dr. Emilio DeBess  
State Public Health Veterinarian  
Oregon Department of Human Services  
(971)673-1111

### **West Nile Virus Detected in Umatilla County**

Pendleton, Ore. -- A bird has tested positive for West Nile Virus in Umatilla County. The bird was tested by the Washington State Lab and reported to Umatilla County by the Walla Walla Health Department. The bird was found dead by a land owner south of Pendleton at McKay Reservoir.

“This is the first case of West Nile Virus found in a bird in Umatilla County” stated Genni Lehnert, Administrator of the Umatilla County Public Health Division. Last year a horse near Milton-Freewater tested positive for West Nile but to date no human cases have been reported in Umatilla County.

“West Nile has already been detected in 19 of Oregon’s Counties so we have been expecting to find it here as well. We have a good surveillance system in place and it worked exactly as it was supposed to,” stated Ron Montgomery, Manager of the West Umatilla Vector Control District.

West Nile is primarily a bird disease, and crows are especially susceptible. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on an infected bird and can pass the virus to humans, horses or other hosts when they bite. Genni Lehnert, Administrator of the Umatilla County Public Health Division stated “Most people who become infected do not become ill. Some may develop mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, and occasionally swollen lymph glands or a rash. In rare cases West Nile may cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. Individuals with severe or unusual headaches should seek medical care as soon as possible. People over 50 are at an increased risk.”

-- continued --

“The risk of West Nile is low but we do encourage people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves against mosquito bites,” said Lehnert. She offered the following suggestions to reduce the risk of exposure to West Nile:

- Get rid of old tires and other containers where water can accumulate and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in mosquito infested areas.
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET, making sure to follow the directions on the container.
- Be sure screen doors and windows are in good repair.

“The peak period for mosquito activity has ended and no mosquito pools tested positive for West Nile this season” says Ron Montgomery, West Umatilla Vector Control District Manager. “As nighttime temperatures dip into the low 40’s, mosquitoes will begin seeking shelter or begin to die off altogether” Montgomery said. Landowners are still reminded to remove any standing water on their property that may serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Local Officials and health care providers in Umatilla County have been notified of the virus detection.

The State of Oregon has set up a West Nile Virus Information line. For more information please call 1-866-703-INFO.

For more information on the West Nile, visit the following web sites:

West Umatilla Vector Control District

<http://www.wuvcd.org>

Umatilla County Public Health Division

<http://www.co.umatilla.or.us/westnile.htm>

Oregon Department of Human Services

<http://gov.oregon.gov/>

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>

###

MEDIA ADVISORY:

An electronic copy of this news release is available at:

<http://www.co.umatilla.or.us/deptwebs/News/news.htm>

and

<http://www.ucem.us/>