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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 7, 2012

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**OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES
MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS ALERT**
- Okaloosans Are Urged to Take Precautions to Prevent Exposure -

OKALOOSA COUNTY – The Okaloosa County Health Department reports the second West Nile virus (WNV) case and the first West Nile virus related death in Okaloosa County for 2012. “Our condolences go out to the individual’s family and friends,” said Dr Karen Chapman, Director of the Okaloosa County Health Department. “My hope for her family and friends is that happier memories of times shared with their loved one will carry them through this sorrowful time.”

West Nile virus is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Four out of five people infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms. Most people who develop symptoms develop West Nile fever. Common symptoms for West Nile fever include fever, nausea, headache, fatigue and occasionally skin rash, swollen lymph glands, and eye pain. In less than 1% of people who develop symptoms, severe illness develops. This is called neuroinvasive WNV infection. Neuroinvasive infection involves the brain, the spinal cord, and the lining of the brain and spinal cord. People with this form of WNV infection have high fever, severe headache, and changes in mental status. People with severe disease often need to be hospitalized. Severe disease can result in death.

There are no medications to treat or vaccines to prevent West Nile virus infection. People over 50 and those with compromised immune systems are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill when they become infected with the virus. If people have symptoms that cause concern, they should contact their healthcare provider.

“I urge all individuals to take personal steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites,” said Dr. Chapman.

TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES, REMEMBER “DRAIN & COVER”

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots, or any other container where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, bottles, cans, pots, broken appliances, and other items that are not being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets’ water bowls at one or two times a week.
- Protect boats & vehicles from rain with tarps that do not accumulate water. Pump out bilges.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and keep appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.
- Cover skin with clothing or repellent. Wear shoes, socks, and long pants, and long-sleeves. (This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work outside.)
- Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always read label directions carefully. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months of age.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

TIPS ON REPELLENT USE

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET are generally recommended. These products are generally available at local pharmacies.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is appropriate: DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old, and oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children less than 3 years old.
- Do not allow young children to apply repellent to themselves; have an adult apply it. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child’s skin and clothing.
- Apply repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing. Do not apply repellent to the eyes or mouth, cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.

- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing or gear. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.

The Florida Department of Health continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses. To read frequently asked questions about repellants and mosquito-borne illnesses, visit www.HealthyOkaloosa.com, or call the Environmental Health Division at the OCHD at (850) 833-9247.

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