



**PLANNING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MARK HIGGINS, *Chair*
AMBER CONCEPCION
STEVEN G. DERSHEM

Willowbank Office Building
420 Holmes Street
Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823-1488
Telephone (814) 355-6791
FAX (814) 355-8661
www.centrecountypa.gov

DIRECTOR
RAYMOND J. STOLINAS, JR.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
ELIZABETH LOSE

May 15, 2023

via email

Dear Centre County Municipal Official:

On May 1, 2023, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection ("PaDEP"), Centre County West Nile Virus ("WNV") Program, kicked off the 2023 tick and mosquito surveillance season. While most insects provide beneficial effects, such as being part of the food web or acting as pollinators for plants, ticks and mosquitoes can become a biting nuisance or more importantly transmit diseases that can make you sick. WNV is a mosquito borne disease that produces severe neurological symptoms in approximately one percent of humans that become infected. There are approximately 60 species of mosquitoes in Pennsylvania, of these, 12 are capable of infecting humans with WNV. Each week the Centre County WNV Program collects environmental samples of tick and mosquito populations from our communities to assess disease transmission potential. Communities with mosquito and tick populations showing elevated disease risks are proactively targeted with control measures and personal protection education. Additionally, PaDEP uses the data collected to [publish seasonal risk values](#) throughout Commonwealth. Funding for the collection, testing and control of tick and mosquito populations is supported through a grant provided by PaDEP.

In Centre County in 2022 there were 5 positive tests for WNV, 0 from birds, 5 from mosquitoes, and 0 from horses. Across Pennsylvania, there were 2,817 positive tests on mosquitoes, 6 birds, and 3 horses. There were 34 human cases reported statewide.

Between May and the end of September, adult mosquito trapping will be periodically conducted in your municipality. All surveillance equipment will be labeled as to its purpose and will contain contact information. You may see Centre County WNV Program biologists collecting insects by dragging a white cloth along the edge of local parks or setting mosquito traps, to measure the risk of tick and mosquito populations transmitting diseases in Centre County. While our agency actively monitors tick and mosquito populations, all residents in our community have a shared responsibility to reduce habitat for these insects. We encourage the reduction of standing water and the creation of a tick-safe zone around your property. Further steps to prevent bites from mosquitoes and ticks include:

- Insect repellent, used properly, to keep mosquitoes and ticks off your skin. Now recommended is the use of repellents that are EPA approved containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, and adults should help apply repellents to children under 12.

- Wear long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and socks to keep bugs off your skin.
- Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully, including your armpits, scalp, and groin. Remove ticks immediately using fine-tipped tweezers.
- Early morning, late afternoon, and early evening are peak biting times for mosquitoes that spread West Nile virus. It's especially important to use repellent if you're outdoors at these times.
- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, even in small containers. Walk around the outside of your home at least once a week and empty any water that's collected in toys, pet food and water bowls, birdbaths, buckets, and other objects. Check under bushes and other hard-to-see places. Get rid of old tires and other objects that can collect water.
- Create a tick-safe zone around your home. For example: remove leaf litter and clear grasses and brush around your home and the edge of the lawn, and place mulch between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks off the places you work and play the most.
- Check for and repair holes in window and door screens.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact the County Planning & Community Development Office. The Pennsylvania Department of Health website www.westnile.state.pa.us contains more information, as well as up to date local and statewide surveillance results during the mosquito season.

The Centre County Surveillance and Control Program will not be accepting dead birds for testing due to avian influenza (HPAI) in Pennsylvania and its potentially devastating effect on wild and domestic birds. This will be in effect until such time as HPAI is deemed to be no longer a problem. In cases of five or more dead birds at one site, reports can be forwarded to the Pennsylvania Game Commission at: 610-926-3136 or to: pcgwildlifehealth@pa.gov.

Sincerely,
CENTRE COUNTY MOSQUITO DISEASE CONTROL



BY: Wayne Laubscher, Centre County WNV Program Coordinator
(814) 404-4012 cell
wnlaubscher@centrecountypa.gov