



State of New Jersey

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To: Local health departments
From: Vectorborne Disease Program
Communicable Disease Service
New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)
Date: August 2, 2016
Subject: Recommendation to Discontinue Routine West Nile Virus (WNV) Bird Testing

Beginning in the 2016 mosquito-season, the state of New Jersey will no longer routinely conduct West Nile Virus (WNV) avian testing.

Why was this decision made?

Although reports of dead birds and positive WNV laboratory results from birds were once early indicators of WNV activity in an area, WNV is now considered endemic to the New Jersey bird and mosquito populations. This means we expect to see WNV in birds and mosquitoes from all localities of the state each year. Additionally, it is thought that some birds have adapted to the virus and may not always become clinically ill and we may find human cases before avian cases. Therefore, there is limited utility in continuing to report and test dead or ill members of the crow family (Corvids). This recommendation was developed by the State's interagency Vectorborne Disease Working Group.

Should we continue to report dead or ill birds?

It is still recommended to notify your county mosquito control agency if you have a report of a dead or ill bird. The county mosquito control agency may choose to do additional mosquito surveillance in that area, even when the bird is not tested at the NJDOH Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL).

If you find sick or dead wild birds, do not handle them. Immediately contact the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife at **908-236-2118** or USDA-Wildlife Services at **908-735-5654 ext. 2** to report observations of sick or dead wild birds. All poultry owners, whether commercial producers or backyard enthusiasts, immediately should report sick or unexplained bird deaths to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health at **609-671-6400** or email state.veterinarian@ag.state.nj.us. For small flocks, this can include deaths of one bird per day for two days in a row.

Is WNV surveillance still continuing?

Yes. Mosquito pools are still being submitted to PHEL and the Cape May BSL-3 Laboratory by county mosquito control agencies to test for WNV and other mosquito-borne diseases. An interim surveillance system has been implemented until a permanent WNV electronic surveillance system or similar database is operational. Partners throughout the state are working hard to ensure that results of the testing, including geographic information, are still being communicated to the appropriate partners for immediate surveillance and abatement activities. Mosquito-borne virus test results are available weekly from NJDOH and Rutgers Center for Vector Biology: www.nj.gov/health/cd/westnile/techinfo.shtml and <http://vectorbio.rutgers.edu/>

Can we still request WNV bird testing?

Yes. Although we do not recommend routine testing, PHEL still has the capacity to test birds for WNV, and will accept limited requests. If you would like to submit a bird for testing, please call the Communicable Disease Service during routine business hours (609-826-5964) and they will generate a unique ID for you to use when shipping. An updated form CDS-4 is available online at www.nj.gov/health/cd/forms.shtml. As with previous years, the bird must be fresh and suitable for testing. PHEL can conduct testing on any avian species.

We would like to thank you all for your cooperation and support in submitting and reporting dead and ill birds during previous WNV seasons. Your surveillance efforts contributed greatly to the ability to control the spread of WNV when it was an emerging, novel disease.