

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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### **Mosquitoes Are Spreading Diseases in Southwest Nebraska**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is seeing a higher number than usual of mosquito-related disease this year. Two more human cases of West Nile Virus have been reported in the health district, and unfortunately there has been one death due to West Nile Virus. One horse has also tested positive for West Nile.

Mosquitoes in the district continue to test positive for West Nile Virus and have now also tested positive for St. Louis Encephalitis Virus (SLE). “The symptoms of St. Louis Encephalitis are very similar to West Nile,” explained Sarah Minnick, Program Manager at SWNPHD. “You can protect yourself from both of these diseases by using bug repellent, dressing in lightweight long sleeves and pants, and draining standing water or using mosquito dunks. Try to avoid being outdoors during the hours of dawn and dusk when our mosquitoes are most active.”

Most people do not have symptoms after being infected with SLE. Those who do get sick usually start 4 to 14 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms start abruptly with fever, headache, dizziness, nausea, and general weakness. Typically, symptoms get worse over a period of several days to a week, then improve.

Severe cases of SLE are rare and may include more serious symptoms such as stiff neck, confusion, disorientation, dizziness, tremors, and unsteadiness. Seek medical care right away as this may be signs of central nervous system infection.

There are no medications to prevent or treat SLE. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses, including West Nile and SLE. Rest, fluids, and over-the-counter pain medications may relieve some symptoms. In severe cases, some people may need to be hospitalized to receive supportive treatment, such as intravenous fluids, pain medication, and nursing care.

Per the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, the signs and symptoms of West Nile Virus in horses include loss of appetite, depression, fever, quivering muscles, and weakness of limbs. Infected horses may or may not show symptoms. Vaccination is the best practice to prevent West Nile Virus in horses. Owners should contact their veterinarian for additional information.

For more information on mosquito-borne diseases, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223 or visit [cdc.gov/mosquitoes](https://cdc.gov/mosquitoes). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier,

Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, TikTok, You Tube and Instagram or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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