

NEWS RELEASE

June 22, 2026
For Immediate Release
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Time to Protect Against West Nile Virus

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) reminds everyone to protect themselves from West Nile Virus (WNV) by avoiding mosquito bites. Since 2012, more than 50 cases of WNV have been reported in southwest Nebraska. Nebraska continues to have one of the highest rates of West Nile Virus in the country. There is no vaccine for people and no special medicine to treat the virus.

“West Nile virus spreads when an infected mosquito bites a person, horse, or other animal,” said Sarah Minnick, Program Manager for SWNPHD. “The best way to stay safe is to prevent mosquito bites. Use insect repellent, wear protective clothing, and get rid of standing water where mosquitoes can grow.”

Most people who get West Nile Virus do not feel sick. People who do get sick may have a fever, headache, body aches, or feel very tired. These symptoms can last for several weeks or even months. In rare cases, the virus can cause serious illnesses that affect the brain or spinal cord. This can lead to weakness, paralysis, or death.

Here are some ways to prevent West Nile Virus:

- Use insect repellent when you are outdoors.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Look for standing water around your home and drain it if possible.
- Use mosquito dunks in water that cannot be drained, such as birdbaths, ponds, or livestock water tanks (These products are safe for people, pets, birds, and fish).
- Vaccinate horses against West Nile each spring.
- Keep horses in barns during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Avoid turning on lights in barns and use regular light bulbs around the outside of the stable.

Throughout the summer, SWNPHD traps mosquitoes and sends them to be tested for West Nile Virus. The public will be notified if mosquitoes, people, or horses in the area test positive for the virus.

For questions about West Nile Virus, visit [cdc.gov/west-nile-virus](https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus) or call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Visit [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov) for more information and resources. You can also follow @swnphd on Facebook, You Tube and Instagram.