



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO: Chairman & Members of Regional Council

FROM: Peter Willmott, Director of Health Protection Services/Acting Commissioner

CC: Brent Marshall, CAO

DATE: July 29, 2002

RE: **WNV Update**

This memo is a brief update on West Nile Virus in Halton and the surrounding municipalities.

As of July 29th, seven crows in Halton have tested positive for West Nile Virus. Two of the positive birds were found in rural Halton, one in Milton and one in Halton Hills. The remaining five were from the urban areas in the south, two in Burlington and three in Oakville. Across the province, thirty-six positive birds have been identified. Of this number three were in Hamilton, four were in Mississauga and one in Wellington County. In addition to the positive birds, the virus has been identified in five mosquito pools (i.e. a sample of mosquitoes from one trap) in the Clarkson and Port Credit area of Mississauga. No positive mosquito pools have been identified elsewhere in the province.

Health Department staff are continuing with a variety of initiatives to monitor for West Nile Virus. Dead birds surveillance is continuing. However, because of resource limitations at the laboratory and the increase in dead birds submissions across the province - as of July 29th, 4324 birds had been submitted - the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Laboratory in Guelph is now only accepting four birds per week, per health department. Furthermore, the laboratory is asking health departments not to submit birds from areas where two positive birds have been identified. As a result, it will now, no longer accept specimens from Burlington or Oakville. The rationale for this is that the results for these areas indicate that the virus is already present and that laboratory resources should be directed to identify the extent of the problem province-wide. Staff, however, will continue to monitor dead bird sightings to assist with its mosquito surveillance activities and will submit birds from the Milton and Halton Hills area.

With respect to adult mosquito surveillance, traps have been set up at various sites across the Region, including in locations close to the areas where the positive birds were found. In addition, traps have been set up in S.E. Oakville close to the border with Peel in order to identify any potential "spill over" effect

from the positive mosquito pools in S.W. Mississauga. Mosquitoes captured at these sites are being submitted to Brock University for viral testing.

Staff have also identified potential mosquito breeding sites across the Region and are routinely monitoring for mosquito larvae. These sites are those in close proximity to high-risk areas such as retirement homes and long term care facilities. In addition, staff have surveyed the areas where the positive birds were found in order to identify additional potential mosquito breeding sites and to initiate larvae monitoring. The Health Department has also undertaken a number of activities to inform the public on the status of WNV and to reinforce personal messages to protect against mosquito bites and to reduce their habitat. These include media releases, printed information distributed through local garden centres and other outlets and regular updating of our website. As in 2001, information on WNV has also been circulated to local physicians and hospitals with a request that they implement a human surveillance protocol for WNV and notify the Department of any potential human cases. I would like to emphasise that the risk of human illness due to WNV is low. To date no human cases of WNV have been identified in Canada.

You may have seen media coverage from the City of Winnipeg which has recently enhanced its longstanding annual mosquito control program in the face of limited evidence of WNV in birds. There are significant differences between the situation in Winnipeg and that in Halton. There is no indication that similar mosquito control measures such as larviciding - killing mosquito larvae by placing biological pesticides in water where mosquitoes breed - or adulticiding - killing adult mosquitoes by spraying pesticides from trucks - are required in Halton. Should this be necessary in the future, regional and local councillors will be notified in advance of such action.

Respectfully submitted,

P.W. Willmott

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