

## News Releases

# DHEC News Release: DHEC solicits bird submissions for West Nile testing

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2012

### DHEC solicits bird submissions for West Nile testing

COLUMBIA, S.C. - The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control is seeking the public's help in collecting dead birds to test for West Nile virus.

"Everyone can help us track West Nile virus by submitting dead blue jays, crows, house sparrows, and house finches for testing," said Chris Evans, a Ph.D. entomologist with DHEC's Bureau of Laboratories.

According to Evans, the house sparrows and house finches have been added for testing because of the overall decrease in the number of dead bird submissions, and because of their abundance and higher infection and death rates compared to other birds.

"Birds can be submitted to us through Nov. 30," Evans said. "We ask that everyone review the submission directions and photos of birds that are found on our website at <http://www.scdhec.gov/birdtesting> <<http://www.scdhec.gov/homeandenvironment/reportit/reportdeadbirds/>>. By following those instructions, individuals can safely pick up and transport the birds to the closest **DHEC county environmental health office** <<http://www.scdhec.gov/homeandenvironment/dheclocations/>> for testing."

According to Evans, the public's involvement with dead bird surveillance covers a wider area and helps to identify the virus before it shows up in humans. Birds that test positive for West Nile virus are reported to local mosquito control agencies so they can take appropriate action to protect public health. Because West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes, public health officials recommend the following tips to make areas safer and reduce the numbers of mosquitoes that might spread the virus:

- Remove buckets, cups, bottles, flowerpots, plastic bags, tires or any water-holding containers.

- Do not allow water to stagnate in low-lying areas of the yard, in boats or on tarps that cover yard items.

- Keep birdbaths and pet bowls clean by scrubbing them and flushing with fresh water at least once a week.

- Clean fallen leaves and other debris out of roof gutters and spouting.

Make sure outdoor trash cans have tight-fitting lids. If lids are not available, drill holes in the bottom of the can.

Additional information on mosquito-borne diseases can be found at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/mosquitoes> <<http://www.scdhec.gov/homeandenvironment/insects/mosquitoes/>>. For updated information about recommended mosquito repellants, visit the CDC website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile> <<http://www.cdc.gov/westnile>>.

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**Note to reporters and editors:** Complete list of DHEC county environmental health offices, as referenced in third paragraph, is available at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/Environment/envhealth/region-contacts.htm> <<http://www.scdhec.gov/homeandenvironment/dheclocations/>>.

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*MNR0581*

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