West Nile Virus detected in pelican at Summer Lake Wildlife Area

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SUMMER LAKE, Ore. â€“ West Nile Virus has been detected in a pelican taken from Summer Lake Wildlife Area, marking the first 2007 detection of the disease in Lake County.

The American White Pelican was found dead at Summer Lake on Aug. 20. Positive WNV test results were returned from the Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory today.

This is the first-ever detection of the disease at Summer Lake Wildlife Area. WNV was first detected in Lake County in August 2005 in a hawk found in the Lakeview area. Two cases of equine West Nile were reported in the county in September of 2006. WNV activity statewide is expected to reach its peak during the month of August and then diminish with colder weather.

Lake County public health officials and ODFW are reminding Summer Lake visitors and others who spend time outdoors to limit contact with mosquitoes by wearing mosquito repellant, long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

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About West Nile Virus

Current estimates indicate that only about 20 percent of people who become infected with WNV will develop noticeable symptoms such as headache and fever. Only one in 150 of those that experience symptoms will develop severe symptoms such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). During 2007, there have been six documented human cases in Oregon, none of them in Lake County.

Mild symptoms of WNV can include fever, headache and body aches, swollen lymph glands, and a skin rash. Severe symptoms (called West Nile encephalitis, meningitis and meningoencephalitis) can include high fever, headache and neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. If you experience these symptoms, contact a medical professional immediately.

About Summer Lake Wildlife Area

The 18,900-acre Summer Lake Wildlife Area is one of several areas ODFW manages as wetlands to provide habitat for birds and other wildlife and recreational opportunities to the public.

Historically, wetlands covered much more of Oregon but significant amounts of wetland habitat have been converted for agriculture and urban expansion. Summer Lake and other wildlife areas restore historical wetlands and provide important habitat for migratory birds, waterfowl and other wildlife. Mosquitoes are an important part of the web of life in wetland habitats, comprising a significant food source and forage biomass for animals like birds and bats.

The area is open to the public and current visitors to Summer Lake include wildlife viewers, campers and general season archery hunters. Mourning dove hunters could use the area when the season opens statewide Sept. 1. However, the bulk of hunting at Summer Lake occurs during waterfowl season which does not open until Oct. 5.

Besides wearing long sleeves and pants and mosquito repellent, hunters are reminded to follow routine hygiene measures when dressing game to protect themselves from WNV and other wildlife diseases. Those precautions are:

Wear rubber or latex gloves when handling and cleaning game animals.

Do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face when handling animals.

Keep raw game meat and meatâ€™s juices away from other foods.

Thoroughly clean knives and any other equipment or surfaces used to dress or process harvested game animals. A solution of one third cup of bleach in one gallon of water is an effective disinfectant. Commercial household cleaners with bleach can also be used.

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after handling game animals (or with alcohol-based hand products if clean water is not available).

Cook all game meat thoroughly (up to at least 165Â° F) to kill disease organisms and parasites. Use a food thermometer to ensure the inside of the animal has reached at least 165Â° F.

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