



Richard Lautens/Torstar Nwteork

West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes discovered in Georgetown. Mosquitoes carrying the virus have now been discovered in all four of Halton Region's municipalities this summer.

West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes found in Georgetown

GRAEME FRISQUE

gfrisque@metroland.com

The Halton Region Health Department is alerting Georgetown residents after discovering a test batch of mosquitoes testing positive for the West Nile virus.

Mosquitoes testing positive for the disease have now been discovered in all four of Halton Region's major municipalities.

The Region made the announcement in a release sent Aug. 18.

"The Halton Region Health Department works diligently to reduce the risk of West Nile virus in our community through both education and preventive programs such as larviciding," said Acting Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Daniela Kempkens.

"We can all work together to keep our community safe and protect ourselves from West Nile virus by removing standing water sites that breed mosquitoes and covering up or applying DEET or Icaridin when outside during dusk and dawn."

There have been 24 positive test batches discovered since the beginning of the summer, including one in Halton Hills, 12 in Oakville, six in Burlington and an-

other five in Milton.

Three dead crows carrying the virus were found in Milton at the end of June as well.

The region has not yet reported any human cases so far this summer, but did confirm one case in 2016 in its annual infectious diseases report to council. There were eight confirmed human cases in the region in 2015.

The region is suggesting residents take the following steps to protect themselves and their families from bites from potentially infected mosquitoes.

- Cover up. Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants with tightly-woven fabric.

- Use an approved insect repellent, such as one containing DEET or Icaridin.

- Avoid being outdoors from early evening to morning when mosquitoes are most active and likely to bite, as well as at any time in shady, wooded areas.

- Make sure your window and door screens are tight and without holes, cuts, or other openings.

- Reduce mosquito breeding sites around your home by getting rid of all water-filled containers and objects, where possible. Change the water in bird

baths at least once per week.

According to Health Canada, most people infected with the virus show no symptoms at all.

"Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Most people (70 per cent to 80 per cent) who are infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms."

Mild symptoms first appear within two to 15 days and can include fever, headache, body aches, mild rash, and swollen lymph glands.

"Anyone infected with West Nile virus can be at risk of developing more severe symptoms and health effects. Adults 50 years or older and those with underlying conditions or weaker immune systems, however, are at greater risk," adds Health Canada on its website.

The region provides a map showing the locations of standing water sites that have had larvicide applied, that can be found at halton.ca/wnv.

Residents looking for more information or wishing to report standing water at public facilities should visit halton.ca/wnv, call 3-1-1, or email wnv@halton.ca.

- With files from an earlier report.

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