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# Halton crow tests positive for West Nile virus

West Nile has officially surfaced this year in Halton.

The Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre in Guelph has confirmed a dead crow picked up by the Halton Region Health Department in Burlington on July 25 has tested positive for the mosquito-borne virus.

The crow, found in the area of Tremaine Road and No. 1 Sideroad in Burlington, is the first West Nile-positive crow found in Halton this year.

So far this season, residents have reported to the health department more than 980 dead birds.

The purpose of bird surveillance is to establish where West Nile is present. This information helps the medical officer of health for each local health unit in their efforts to prevent and control West Nile illness, according to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Local health officials are urging people to protect themselves from bug

bites.

"This is the most important time to take the personal protective measures," said Matt Ruf, the region's acting manager of environmental health.

Health Canada has said it's around late July and August when human cases of the virus typically start to appear. That's mainly because the species of mosquitoes that bite both birds and humans and potentially pass on the virus become more prevalent.

Mosquitoes can transmit the virus to humans after becoming infected by feeding on the blood of birds carrying the virus. Measures to protect against mosquito bites, according to the Halton health department, include:

- Covering up. Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants with tightly-woven fabric;
- Avoiding being outdoors in the early evening to morning. This is when mosquitoes are most active and likely to bite, as well as at any time in shady,

wooded areas;

- Reducing mosquito breeding sites around your home by getting rid of all water-filled containers and objects. Change the water in bird baths at least once per week;

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

Ruf is also reminding residents that protection is crucial especially around this time given the hot and humid weather we've been experiencing, since mosquitoes will be itching for a blood meal.

Maps showing the locations of positive-tested birds, as well as standing water sites on public property that have had larvicide—a safe-to-humans pesticide used to kill mosquito breeding grounds—applied are available at [www.halton.ca/wnv](http://www.halton.ca/wnv).

To report a dead bird or standing water, or for more information about West Nile virus, call the region at 905-825-6000.



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