

Three birds in region found to have virus

By **HOWARD MOZEL**
Special to *The Champion*

The number of Halton birds bearing the West Nile Virus (WNV) continues to mount, with confirmation that two more in Oakville were carrying the disease.

In fact, evidence of WNV spreading through southern Ontario keeps growing as health officials test for the virus in birds and begin trapping mosquitoes to also track its progress.

The three WNV-infected birds found in Oakville — first a blue jay, then two crows — were Halton's only confirmed reports at press time.

In Windsor, the first Canadian location to confirm WNV in a dead crow, has found the presence of WNV in seven dead birds. In Toronto, one crow presumed to have the disease is undergoing further testing.

WNV is transmitted by mosquitoes after they become infected by feeding on the blood of birds carrying the virus.

According to Julie Davis, environmental

health specialist with Halton Region, 10 special traps provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care were deployed Monday evening to help determine whether mosquitoes in the area are harbouring the WNV.

Ms Davis explained the traps will be set out at dusk in likely mosquito breeding areas in Oakville by public health inspectors, then picked up in the morning. The insects will then be taken to Brock University for counting and to determine their species.

From there, the now-frozen mosquitoes will be shipped to a federal virology laboratory in Winnipeg to be tested for the presence of WNV.

According to Health Canada, most people infected with WNV don't get sick. Those most at risk include people over age 50, the very young and those with weakened immune systems.

Halton's Medical Officer of Health Dr. Robert Nosal is still encouraging residents to continue their vigilance by protecting themselves from bites and ridding their properties of mosquito breeding sites.



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