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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Take that

The Ontario Renaissance Festival hosted the three-day International Jousting Tournament over the holiday weekend with competitors from across North America vying for "gold." Here, Sir Henry Lee (left) clashes with Sir George Clifford in Italian-style jousting Sunday.

West Nile Virus discovered in five more birds here

By PAUL MITCHISON
Special to The Champion

Five additional crows have tested positive for the West Nile Virus in Halton, bringing the total to nine this year.

The five birds found within the last couple of weeks included three in south Oakville and two in south Burlington.

Last year in Halton, just seven Halton birds tested positive for the virus.

Peter Willmott, director of health protection services for Halton Region, didn't seem worried by the latest results.

"It's not surprising," said Mr. Willmott in an interview Tuesday. "We know the virus is in the bird population, and I'd be surprised if it wasn't — we found it last year."

There have been no reports of humans catching the West Nile Virus in Canada, and the risk of transmission to humans is considered low, although there has been a rise in the number of infected humans in the southern U.S.

Report dead birds

In Halton, residents are asked to call the Region when dead birds — especially crows and blue jays — are found. Reports should be forwarded to (905) 825-6187.

Halton officials are more focused on whether there's any of virus found in the local mosquito population, said Mr. Willmott. If there were, it would be somewhat more troubling, he said.

The Halton Region Health Department has an extensive adult mosquito trapping and mosquito larvae identification program. Adult mosquitoes are sent to Brock University for testing for the virus, and so far there have been no positive test results.

The news of more infected birds in Halton comes at a time when \$9 million more is being invested to support West Nile virus surveillance and prevention this summer across Ontario.

The extra funds were part of an August 1 announcement by Ontario Health and Long-Term Care Minister Tony Clement.

"Our government believes that prevention is the best protection," said Mr. Clement. "This \$9 million investment in

detection and prevention will make people aware of how the virus is spread and how to protect themselves and their families."

Of the \$9 million, \$7.5 million will be available to boards of health for control measures against both larval and adult mosquitoes, since mosquitoes can transmit the virus.

Local health units will also receive \$1.3 million for additional surveillance, public education and local mapping and assessment for possible larviciding. The remaining \$200,000 will fund the stand-by costs of a licenced pesticide applicator, as a contingency measure.

Mr. Willmott said Halton officials are still waiting to see how the extra funding will affect things locally. "We have a fairly comprehensive program at the moment, but I expect we'll hear whether we should sort of expand our activities - or the funds may be directed to smaller areas that don't currently have resources."

While dead bird surveillance will continue throughout Halton, a high number of birds being examined from across Ontario has meant the lab in Guelph is limiting the

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