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Elvis tribute artist set to take festival stage

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52 PAGES "Using Communication to Build Better Communities"



## No sign of West Nile yet, but it's coming: health department

By MELANIE HENNESSEY

The Champion

The Region's 2005 West Nile control program is underway and so far there's no sign of the virus in humans or birds in Halton.

But that doesn't mean the virus that's spread by mosquitoes isn't still a current issue, according to Halton Environmental Health Manager Maurice Dickhout.

"We pretty much suspect it's going to be present again this year," he said. "But they (residents) don't need to be frightened. They need to be aware and take appropriate precautions."

Residents around the region have already started reporting dead birds they've found this season. By the end of last week the health department had 35 dead birds reported — 18 in Burlington, 13 in Oakville, three in Halton Hills and one in Milton.

At press time the tally for this week wasn't available but should be posted on the Region's Web site Tuesday.

"We've had quite a few calls so far," Mr. Dickhout said. "We're relying on the public to report dead bird sightings."

Of those found, two blue jays — one reported in Georgetown last week and the

other from Burlington reported this week — were sent away for testing, with both results coming back negative.

Earlier this month, the Region started its dead bird surveillance and larviciding of surface water sites where staff identified mosquito larvae.

Larviciding treatments of public catch basins will begin when mosquito larvae are found in them. The Region is also prepared for adulticiding — a chemical that will kill adult mosquitoes potentially carrying the disease — if necessary.

While the Region won't collect every dead bird that's reported, health department staff still want to know about all of them and will instruct those who find one on how to dispose of it safely if it's not being picked up for testing.

Mr. Dickhout noted crows and blue jays are generally used as indicators for West Nile presence since they succumb to the disease faster than other birds. Staff may

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### In bloom

The Milton Farmers' Market on Main Street opened for another season Saturday featuring fresh produce and lots of colourful plants like these geraniums offered by vendor Gallant Farms.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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