

# Region set to start West Nile monitoring initiative

## Residents asked to report any dead bird sightings

The Region will kick off its 2008 West Nile virus control program Monday.

The Halton Region Health Department will begin dead bird surveillance and is asking residents to report dead bird sightings by calling (905) 825-6000 or e-mailing wnv@halton.ca.

Those who report a dead bird are asked to provide as much of the following information as possible:

- Type or description of the bird
- Address or closest intersection to where the bird is located
- The length of time the dead bird has been there

Health department staff may collect and submit dead crows and blue jays for viral testing if suitable. If the bird isn't picked up then staff will give direction on how to dispose of the bird safely.

The health department says although it's interested in sightings of all dead birds, it won't be collecting all of them.

West Nile virus is spread through bites from infected mosquitoes.

Although 80 per cent of people infected will have no symptoms, 20 per cent will have a fever, headache, muscle ache and rash.

Standing water that has been sitting for seven days or more can create an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. It often collects in objects like bird-baths, old tires, toys, plant saucers or clogged eavestroughs.

Residents are encouraged to ensure that water doesn't accumulate in these types of objects or to remove them when possible.

"We have consistently found West Nile virus in Halton's bird population since 2001 and in the mosquito population since 2002," said Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal.

"Bird and mosquito surveillance activities and larviciding are all parts of our comprehensive control program. There were only two probable cases of West Nile virus infection diagnosed in Halton last year."

The Region will begin its mosquito larviciding program when staff has identified mosquito larvae in catch basins or areas of standing water.

Locations that receive larviciding will have a sign posted and be listed on the Region's website, www.halton.ca/wnv.

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