

Eight dead crows sent for West Nile tests

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Eight dead crows found throughout York Region have been sent for testing as the municipality continues to monitor the spread of West Nile Virus.

Meanwhile, one confirmed case of a bird death attributable to the virus has been recorded in Mississauga.

Although it will take some time to learn whether or not the birds found dead here were carriers of the virus, it is almost certain the disease will make an appearance once again in York Region this summer, said Darlene Keates, infection control manager with the region's health protection branch.

"I, for one, am not surprised to see it back," Ms Keates said. "I think it was expected back."

Last year, 25 birds killed by the virus were found in the region.

That is a concern, because mosquitoes that feast on the birds can pass the encephalitis along to humans.

No incidents of human infection have occurred so far in York Region.

But the health department is urging

residents to be vigilant in protecting themselves against the disease.

It recommends using mosquito repellent and eliminating breeding areas, such as pools of standing water, where the bugs can procreate.

'It may be a trend we have to learn to live with and protect ourselves against.'

Health officials have closely monitored the spread of West Nile Virus since it turned up in New York State, killing several people a couple of summers ago.

"It certainly seems to be spreading here," Ms Keates said. "It may be a trend we have to learn to live with and protect ourselves against."

The region is interested in hearing from residents who have discovered a dead crow that has not decomposed or been otherwise damaged. Call 1-800-361-5653 or 1-905-895-8004 to make a report.

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