

Surrounding area health units confirm West Nile

Human cases for West Nile virus have been confirmed by both the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit and Peterborough Public Health.

The health unit and public health confirmed residents within their regions had been infected with the West Nile virus Aug. 18. This is the first human case of West Nile virus reported in the HKPR District Health Unit's region since 2012.

"The discovery of a human case of West Nile virus in our region is no surprise, given the wet weather this spring and summer that have created ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes that can spread illness. We have also seen reports this summer of positive human cases of West Nile virus being detected in other parts of Ontario," said Marianne Rock, manager of communicable disease control, epidemiology and evaluation for the HKPR District Health Unit.

"Even though the cold nights and cooler fall days will eventually kill mosquitoes, it's obvious they are still active and pose a health risk. That's why it is very important for people to continue taking precautions and fighting the bite of mosquitoes that can spread West Nile virus."

According to Public Health Ontario's most recent West Nile virus surveillance data, as of Aug. 12, 2017, there have been eight reported (probable or confirmed) human cases of West Nile virus throughout Ontario this year.

Earlier this summer, the health unit detected West Nile virus in mosquitoes that were trapped in Haliburton County. With another human West Nile virus case in Peterborough, and mosquitoes also testing positive in Durham Region and Hastings County this summer, Rock says it's safe to assume West Nile virus is present throughout this part of the province.

"Don't be complacent, because wherever you live, it's important to reduce your risk of mosquitoes that can spread illness," she adds. Peterborough Public Health officials confirmed the first human case of West Nile virus acquired locally Aug. 18.

Although the risk of becoming infected is low, prevention against bites is the best protection. Individuals can protect themselves by covering up when going outside between the hours of dusk and dawn. They can also clean up once a week, get rid of standing water around their homes in places such as bird baths, eavestroughs, wheelbarrows and flower pots etc. Use insect repellent containing DEET.

More information can be found at www.hkpr.on.ca and www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca.

Submitted by HKPR District Health Unit and Peterborough Public Health