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Serosurvey Results Reveal No West Nile Virus Infection among Stamford and Greenwich Residents Surveyed

A survey conducted last October by federal, state and local health officials in parts of Stamford and Greenwich, Connecticut showed no evidence of West Nile virus infection among the 731 persons whose blood was tested. The results are being published today in the weekly publication of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, together with results from similar surveys conducted in Suffolk County, Long Island and Staten Island, New York City.

"The survey results are further confirmation that the human risk of getting WNV infection in Connecticut in 2000 was very low," according to Commissioner Joxel Garcia, M.D., M.B.A.

"While the results of the survey are encouraging, we still do not know enough about WNV to assume that the human risk of WNV infection will remain low in 2001."

The door-to-door household survey was conducted in mid-October 2000 in the southern part of Stamford and southeastern portion of Greenwich where intense West Nile virus activity occurred in birds. Investigators chose a random sample of 646 households, and 731 persons aged 12 years or older agreed to participate by giving blood samples and completing interviews. A total of 96 WNV positive crows and 4 positive pools of mosquitoes were found in the area surveyed.

"The survey's findings are not a cause for complacency," said Dr. James Hadler, Connecticut State Epidemiologist. "Based on the data collected from the other survey areas, 121 persons were probably infected with WNV in the area surveyed in Suffolk County (where no human cases of severe illness occurred), and 1574 persons were probably infected in Staten Island, where there were 10 severe cases of WNV disease.

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“The combination of a cool summer and intense mosquito control and public awareness activities carried out in Stamford and Greenwich beginning in May may have contributed to the low risk to people in that area.” Dr. Hadler explained. “Among the residents surveyed, at least 80 percent reported taking some personal protective measures against WNV, and at least 68% of all households took efforts like checking gutters and eliminating standing water in wading pools, birdbaths, and plant containers to reduce mosquito breeding around their home.”

"We need to maintain the same type of vigilance and pre-emptive mosquito control activities for WNV this coming year as we had in 2000," stated Dr. Garcia. "If we drop our guard, we could experience the type of outbreak that West Nile virus has caused in other areas."

On October 17 2000, the department announced the identification of the only human case of WNV infection identified in 2000. The case involved a woman from Norwalk who was tested at the request of her physician. She experienced several days of headache without other specific symptoms and was not hospitalized. Based on the timing of her headache and the test results, she was most likely exposed to infected mosquitoes sometime in mid-August.

The Connecticut Mosquito Management Program is coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It is a multi-agency cooperative effort consisting of the DEP, the Department of Public Health, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, the Department of Agriculture, and the University of Connecticut Department of Pathobiology and Veterinary Science.

Information on West Nile virus is available at the DPH website at www.state.ct.us/dph.

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