

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 17, 2003

Contact: C. Mack Sewell, NM Dept. of Health, State Epidemiologist - 827-0006  
Ann Powers, NM Dept. of Health, Public Health Division, Public Information Officer - 827-2308

## Media Alert

### *West Nile Virus Weekly Update*

## New Mexico State Total 194

SANTA FE -- The state Department of Health announced today that as of 1 p.m. there are four new confirmed cases of West Nile Virus, making the total number of cases statewide 194. Those four cases are in a 38-year-old man from Bernalillo County, a 43-year-old man from San Juan County and an 87-year-old man from Chavez County, all of whom had mild cases, and a 63-year-old man from Lea County with more severe disease.

The Department of Health began providing daily weekday updates on the West Nile Virus starting shortly after the first human case was reported in July through October 9<sup>th</sup>. Weekly updates are currently being provided on Friday afternoons.

Even though cooler temperatures have slowed the virus' progress, state health officials are still encouraging people to follow the recommended precautions until their community has experienced its first hard frost.

“In people, West Nile Virus can cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, nausea, headache and muscle aches,” said C. Mack Sewell, State Epidemiologist. “If someone feels they may have the flu, they should see their health care provider for medical evaluation. The elderly are at most risk for serious disease from West Nile Virus as well as from flu. As the flu season will likely start in the next month or so, now is a good time to begin flu vaccination. No flu cases have been reported yet in New Mexico.”

To date, 69 of the 194 patients have had encephalitis or meningitis. The other 125 cases had milder forms of the virus, which usually do not require hospitalization. The totals for each county to date are: Bernalillo 32, Chaves 7, Cibola 1, Colfax 6, Curry 25, De Baca 2, Dona Ana 9, Eddy 2, Guadalupe 1, Lea 3, Los Alamos 1, Otero 1, Quay 3, Rio Arriba 20, Roosevelt 4, San Juan 17, San Miguel 7, Sandoval 18, Santa Fe 11, Socorro 3, Taos 4, Torrance 5, Union 1, and Valencia 11.

The state has had four fatal cases of West Nile, a 78-year-old man in Chaves County, an 88-year-old woman in Sandoval County, and a 76-year-old woman and an 80-year-old woman both of San Miguel County.

To date, there have been 416 cases of West Nile Virus infection in horses reported to the Department from 30 counties. The only counties from which horse cases of West Nile Virus have not been reported are DeBaca, Harding and Hidalgo counties. Counties reporting the most horse cases include San Juan (82 cases), Bernalillo (34 cases), Santa Fe (33 cases), Valencia (26 cases) and Rio Arriba (24).

The Department of Health continues to recommend that people take the following steps to reduce the risk of West Nile infection:

- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks whenever you are outdoors.
- Use insect repellent products with no more than 35 percent DEET for adults and follow the directions on the label for children from ages 2-12. Products containing soybean oil and eucalyptus oil have also been shown to be effective but need to be applied more often.
- Keep windows and doors closed if not screened. If you leave your house doors or windows open, make sure they have screens that fit tightly and have no holes.
- Do not allow water to stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, trash containers, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, etc.
- Horse owners should contact their veterinarian to have their horses vaccinated against West Nile Virus.

**#30#**