



West Nile Program

Public Safety Department
Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Division
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) #35

Lafayette College West Nile Program

Public Safety Department – Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Division

Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) #35 – Revised October 2012

Pennsylvania residents should report and submit dead birds to your County Coordinator

What is West Nile virus?

West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, a brain inflammation. Infected mosquitoes pass the virus onto birds, animals and people. West Nile virus was first detected in North America in 1999 in New York, and in Pennsylvania in 2000. Prior to that it had only been found in Africa, Eastern Europe, and West Asia. West Nile virus cases occur primarily in the mid summer or early fall, although mosquito season is usually April-October.

The principle route of human infection with West Nile virus is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Additional routes of infection have become apparent during the 2002 West Nile epidemic. It is important to note that these other methods of transmission represent a very small proportion of cases. Other methods of transmission include blood transfusion, organ transplantation, mother-to-child (ingestion of breast milk and transplacental) and occupational.

How You Can Help with Dead Bird Reporting.

The West Nile virus infects certain wild birds. The infected birds, especially crows, are known to get sick and die from the infection. Reporting of dead birds is a good way to check for West Nile virus activity in the environment and allow implementation of prevention and control measures to minimize the spread of the virus. The Pennsylvania Dead Bird Surveillance program for West Nile virus relies on Commonwealth citizens to report and submit dead birds seen around their property or elsewhere to their West Nile County Coordinators. Since the virus was detected in New York City in 1999, thousands of dead birds have been submitted for testing by citizens in the northeastern US. **Pennsylvania residents are strongly encouraged to report and submit dead birds.** Residents should take the following steps when they see a dead bird:

1. [Click here](#) to report dead bird sightings on-line.
2. The West Nile Control Coordinators are collecting 5 birds per week from each county for testing for West Nile Virus, from May 1 through October 31. The program is only testing corvids, raptors, and jays for testing at the present time. If you are interested in submitting your dead bird for testing and your bird is a corvid, raptor, or jay, call your West Nile County Coordinator to see if your county is still accepting submissions, and for instructions.
3. Avoid bare-hand contact when handling dead birds. Use rubber gloves when handling a dead bird. If you do not have gloves, insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird. Each bird should be placed in tied plastic bag, and then placed inside a second tied bag.
4. If you are not submitting the bird for testing, the bagged bird can be placed in the trash.
5. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after discarding the dead bird.

West Nile Virus Surveillance County Coordinators

County	Name Email	Company	Address	Phone Fax
Northampton	Edward Firman efirman@northamptoncounty.org	Northampton Co. Chief Executive Officer	669 Washington St. Easton, PA 18042-7411	(610)746-1983 (610)746-1926