



News from the Office of  
ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

## NEWS RELEASE

### Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

August 2, 2012

**CONTACT:** Peter Anderson / Peter.Anderson@erie.gov  
Phone: (716)858-8500 / Mobile: (716) 270-7842

### **BURSTEIN URGES AWARENESS, PRECAUTIONS ON WEST NILE VIRUS**

*Rise In WNV (+) Mosquito Pools Prompts Call for Vigilance, Education on How to “Fight the Bite”*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Erie County Health (“ECDOH”) Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein today called attention to a rise in the high number of West Nile virus-positive (“WNV+”) mosquito pools thus far in Erie County. Through July 26 of this year, 207 mosquito pools from Erie County have been submitted for viral testing, with 17% (43/207) reported as WNV+, according to the New York State Department of Health (“NYSDOH”) Arbovirus Laboratory. In all of 2011, 605 mosquito pools from Erie County were submitted for testing, and 4.42% (28/605) were WNV+. While the 2012 mosquito surveillance season currently is at its approximate midpoint, the 43 WNV+ mosquito pools reported so far has exceeded Erie County’s previous annual high of 29 WNV+ mosquito pools recorded in 2005. This high count is especially significant because the 2005 surveillance of adult mosquitoes was conducted on a broader geographic basis by the Erie County Health Department.

“It’s more important than ever for residents to understand and address the health threat posed by potentially infected mosquitoes, and to minimize mosquito contacts whenever and wherever possible,” **said Burstein.** “Use an insect repellent containing at least 30% DEET when you can for adults, and no more than 30% when used on children. Insect repellents are not recommended for children younger than 2 months. Especially during the evening hours, people should dress appropriately by wearing a long sleeved shirt and long pants when outside. Parents should remember to ensure that their children are protected too. People at higher risk from mosquito bites are the immune-compromised, the elderly, and the very young.”

**Burstein added,** “Residents should use common sense when they are outside and be aware of the environments that produce and protect mosquitoes: stagnant, standing water and weeds, tall grass and shrubbery, which provide an outdoor home for mosquitoes. There are also ways to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds in your yard, including dumping out standing water, cleaning clogged gutters, and changing the water in your birdbath.”

No WNV+ human cases have been reported in Erie County in 2012 to date. Although there is no direct correlation between the number of WNV+ mosquito pools and the number of human WNV+ cases in a specific area, statewide surveillance data indicates that the risk of acquiring a WNV+ human infection increases following a peak in the number of WNV+ mosquito pools. Twenty of the 43 WNV+ pools were collected from gravid traps deployed in storm water catch basins. All mosquito pools were comprised of the species, *Culex pipiens* and/or *Culex restuans*, which primarily feeds on birds. However, *Culex pipiens* will bite humans, especially during the evening, and readily enters houses. *Culex restuans* is reported to bite humans when abundant.

ECDOH recommends several other strategies to “fight the bite”, including maintaining your pool by chlorinating and filtering; maintaining ornamental ponds by stocking them with fish and using bubblers and fountains; removing used tires from your property; eliminating any stagnant water in tin cans, plastic containers, or any container that holds water; and repairing window and door screens.

**For more information:**

on ECDOH, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

on West Nile virus, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=west-nile-virus>

on mosquitoes and disease, visit [http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/west\\_nile\\_virus/](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/west_nile_virus/)

on insect repellents, visit

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/pages/Insect-Repellents.aspx>

###