



FACT SHEET: West Nile Virus - Overview

“West Nile Virus” is a flavivirus commonly found in Africa, West Asia, and the Middle East. It is closely related to St. Louis encephalitis virus found in the United States. The virus can infect humans, birds, mosquitoes, horses and some other mammals. “West Nile Fever” is a case of mild disease in people, characterized by flu-like symptoms. West Nile Fever typically last only a few days and does not appear to cause any long-term health effects.

More severe diseases due to a person being infected with this virus can be “West Nile Encephalitis”, “West Nile Meningitis” or “West Nile Meningoencephalitis”.

Encephalitis refers to an inflammation of the brain, Meningitis is an inflammation of the membrane around the brain and the spinal cord, and Meningoencephalitis refers to inflammation of the brain and the membrane surrounding it.

Infection with this virus does not always result in clinical disease. Studies have shown that normally only a small percentage of humans that are infected with the virus will show symptoms of the disease.

It is not known how long it has been in the U.S., but C.D.C. scientists believe the virus has probably been in the eastern U.S. since the early summer of 1999, possibly longer.

The continued expansion of West Nile Virus in the United States indicates that it is permanently established in the Western Hemisphere.

In the temperate zone of the world (i.e., between latitudes 23.5 degrees and 66.5 degrees north and south), West Nile encephalitis cases occur primarily in the late summer or early fall. In the southern climates where temperatures are milder, West Nile Virus can be transmitted year round.

For Additional Information Contact or Visit the Following Websites:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 3415-28TH STREET PORT HURON, MI 48060 (810) 987-5306

www.stclaircounty.org/offices/health/updates.asp

www.michigan.gov/westnilevirus

www.cdc.gov