

West Nile Virus Surveillance Plan

In 2001, West Nile virus (WNV) was identified in wild birds in five southern Wisconsin counties. In cooperation with multiple partners, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health is conducting surveillance for WNV to detect the presence of this virus throughout the state and assess the human risk of infection. Enhanced arbovirus surveillance, including surveillance for WNV, will include four components this year:

1. Reporting of patients that test positive for a mosquito borne virus
2. Reporting wild sick/dead crows, blue jays and ravens, and testing selected birds for WNV from May through mid-November
3. Reporting cases of encephalitis in horses to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and testing suspect horses for one or more arboviruses including WNV
4. Trapping, identifying, and testing mosquitoes for arboviruses in certain areas of Wisconsin

Wild Bird Surveillance

Some wild bird species, especially crows and blue jays, are very susceptible to WNV and become ill and die when infected with the virus. WNV infected birds have been found dead most often individually and not in mass die-offs. Some governmental agencies may collect and test wild birds for WNV during the mosquito season to detect the presence of the virus in the environment.

Wild bird surveillance in Wisconsin consists of citizens reporting sick or dead crows, blue jays, or ravens to their local health departments, or animal control officers. Birds that are suitable for testing are submitted to the USDA Wildlife Services Laboratory to be tested for WNV.

If you should find a sick or dead crow, blue jay, or raven, please call the WNV Hotline at 800-433-1610 to report it, or contact your local health department to report it. There is no evidence to indicate people can get infected with WNV from handling infected birds, but sanitary precautions in handling any dead animal is warranted. This includes using gloves or an inverted plastic bag to collect and contain a carcass that may be collected for testing or using a shovel or other tool to pick up a bird for disposal.

The following link from the [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) contains photos and descriptive information on crows and blue jays. Although ravens are included in Wisconsin's WNV surveillance, photos are not available at this link. The common raven is a species found in northern Wisconsin. It is a black bird that looks very similar to a crow but is slightly larger. This site also includes photos and information on species easily mistaken for crows (starlings and blackbirds) but NOT included in WNV surveillance.