

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATOR STEVE STERN INFORMS COMMUNITY OF WEST NILE HOTLINE

Huntington, NY– Suffolk County Legislator Steve Stern (D-Huntington) 16th LD is informing residents that Suffolk County has activated a West Nile Hotline as part of an on-going effort to detect and prevent the spread of West Nile Virus in our community.

If you see a dead bird, call the Department of Health Services' Public Health Hotline at 631-787-2200 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Health Department will determine whether the bird will be picked up for testing. The Hotline will be active until Labor Day.

West Nile virus, first detected in Suffolk County in 1999, is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The virus can cause serious illness, and in some cases, death. It is estimated that 20 percent of those who become infected will develop West Nile Fever. Mild symptoms include fever, headache and body aches and occasionally a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of severe infection, or West Nile encephalitis or meningitis, include high fever, muscle weakness, stupor and disorientation. If you experience any of these symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

Individuals, especially those 50 or over, or those with compromised immune systems, who are most at risk should take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Make sure window screens are in place and in good condition, minimize the amount of time you spend outdoors between dusk and dawn, wear shoes, socks and long pants and a long sleeved shirt when outdoors for extended periods and use a mosquito repellent containing DEET. Do not apply insect repellents to children under the age of three and make certain to follow package directions to assure proper application.

To reduce the mosquito population around homes, residents should try to eliminate stagnant water where mosquitoes breed:

- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.
- Remove all discarded tires on the property.

- Make sure roof gutters drain properly, and clean clogged gutters.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Change the water in birdbaths.
- Clean vegetation and debris from the edges of ponds and keep shrubs and grass trimmed.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs.
- Drain water from pool covers.

For medical questions relating to West Nile virus, contact your health care provider or call 631-854-0333. For further information on mosquitos and mosquito-borne illnesses visit the Department of Health Services website, www.suffolkcountyny.gov/health and look under “seasonal trends.” To report mosquito problems or stagnant pools of water, call the Department of Public Works Vector Control Division at 631- 852-4270.