



Friday, May 31, 2024

## **Annual mosquito spraying begins to reduce West Nile virus risk**

In an effort to prevent Boone residents and visitors to the community from contracting West Nile virus, the city's public works staff will spray twice a week, weather permitting, through Labor Day, Public Works Director Waylon Andrews said today.

"It's a preventative issue to protect the public health. It's always a matter of comfort because there are places like the high school ballpark where the mosquitoes can just make it miserable," Andrews said. "It's important to us to take this action because reducing the mosquito population is a crucial step in preventing the spread of this virus."

West Nile is transmitted through bites from infected mosquitoes, which contract the virus from infected birds. While most people never develop symptoms, according to the Cleveland Clinic website, about one in five people will experience fever, fatigue, headaches, body aches, back pain and occasionally skin rashes. In serious cases, West Nile can cause serious brain and spinal cord inflammation, paralysis, seizures and coma. Fortunately, it cannot be spread from human to human.

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services indicate that Culex mosquitoes are "the biggest threat in Iowa because they breed in standing water." They encourage Iowans to eliminate standing water sources and taking such steps and regularly emptying birdbaths and refilling them with fresh water.

The entire city is sprayed, usually beginning at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street on the north side and extending to Highway 30 on the south. The process then involves spraying via all east-west streets. Application cannot – and does not – take place any time winds exceed 10 mph.

The seven-hour process, which first began about 15 years ago with the emergence of the virus in Iowa, typically takes place weekly. During wet years, spraying occurs twice weekly, generally on Tuesday and Thursdays.

Three city employees have earned state certification as pesticide applicators. To maintain their certification, which is administered through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the employees participate in an annual continuing instruction course.

Andrews noted that Boone's designation as a Tree City USA community and a commitment to maintain a healthy population of shade trees does have the unintended consequence of providing habitat for mosquitoes, but vegetation's benefits far outweigh that issue. "And, obviously, spraying addresses the mosquito issue," he added.

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