



## Pest Management

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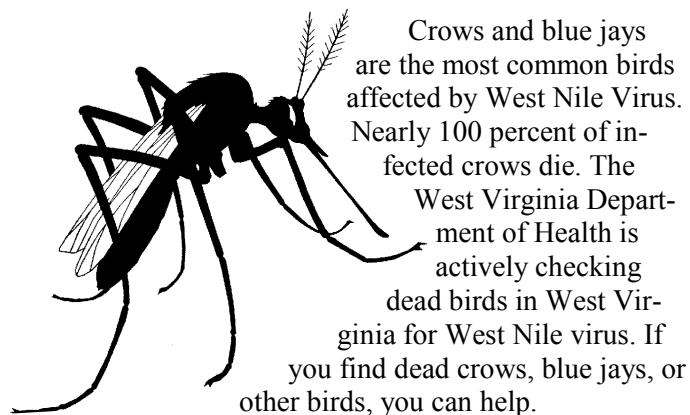
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### Neater Beats the 'Skeeter'

Spring is the time to be neat and rid your house and surroundings of mosquito breeding spots. Tires, gutters, buckets, ditches and bird fountains that hold standing and stagnant water are ideal for breeding mosquitoes. Mosquitoes need water for laying their eggs and for the larvae (wigglers) and the pupae (tumblers) that finally fly away as the blood-sucking adults. The adults can carry West Nile virus, La Crosse encephalitis, malaria, yellow fever, and other nasty human diseases.

West Nile virus, which affects humans, horses, and birds, is caused by the bite of a mosquito that has sucked blood from an infected bird. West Nile virus is a brain infection that mostly affects people over age 50. Most infections are mild. Symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with skin rash and swollen lymph glands. More severe infection may be marked by headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors or convulsions, muscle weakness, paralysis, and-rarely-death. Most West Nile encephalitis occurs in humans in late summer or early fall.

In 2002, three humans, three horses, and 77 birds tested positive in West Virginia. Dead birds testing positive were found in 45 counties.



Make note of where you saw the bird and then call your local health department. Only if the health depart-

ment asks you to do so, put one garbage bag inside another garbage bag, place the dead bird inside the double plastic bags, and refrigerate it. Never handle birds without gloves. If you do not have gloves, place a plastic bag over your hand. If the local health department does not need the bird for testing, it can be discarded in the regular trash. Wash your hands after removing your gloves.

La Crosse encephalitis affects humans (mostly under the age of 16), chipmunks, and squirrels. In West Virginia, it is concentrated in Nicholas, Fayette, Raleigh, and surrounding counties. Most La Crosse infections occur from July to September.

Here are some actions you can take to reduce mosquito populations and protect yourself:

- Empty standing water in old tires, buckets, plastic covers, or any other container where mosquito larvae (wigglers and tumblers) live.
- Empty and change the water in birdbaths, fountains, children's wading pools, rain barrels, and potted plant trays at least once a week if not more often.
- Empty open buckets and containers of collected rain water into a large storage barrel or plastic tank that can be sealed to keep mosquitoes out.
- Drain or fill temporary pools with dirt.
- Keep swimming pool water treated and circulating.
- Use mosquito repellents containing 20 percent to 35 percent DEET. Apply sparingly to children before they play outdoors, and rinse children off with soap and water when they come back inside.
- Wear head nets, long sleeves, and long pants if you venture into areas with high numbers of mosquitoes.
- Make sure window and door screens are "bug tight."
- Replace your outdoor light with yellow "bug" lights.

Farmers should check watering troughs regularly to see that water is running through them. Fresh running water will discourage mosquitoes.