



NEWS RELEASE

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West Nile Virus Detected in Cascade County Mosquito Pool

Great Falls, MT – The first West Nile Virus (WNV) positive mosquito sample of 2026 has been confirmed for Cascade County. A WNV positive sample of adult *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes was collected southeast of the town of Simms. The samples were confirmed positive by the lab at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) in Helena on August 20, 2026. Treatment was conducted in the area where the WNV sample was collected, and ongoing surveillance and monitoring efforts will continue.

There have been no known human infections of WNV detected in Cascade County in 2026. However, residents are strongly encouraged to take steps to protect themselves.

The single best defense against WNV is bite prevention. To protect yourself, use the 5 Ds:

- DEET - Apply repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient, such as DEET, and follow the directions on the package.
- DUSK and DAWN - This is when mosquitoes are most active. Try to avoid outdoor activities during these times.
- DRAIN STANDING WATER - Standing water is the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. Drain such areas around your home (gutters, pools, tires, buckets, water bowls, etc.).
- DRESS APPROPRIATELY - Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks.

The severity and symptoms of WNV can vary widely. Approximately 80% of persons infected experience no symptoms, but up to 20% of infected people can develop a mild illness called West Nile fever. Fever generally resolves itself without treatment, but dangerous brain infections such as encephalitis or meningitis can develop in 1 out of 150 people. Symptoms usually appear 3-14 days after exposure and may include headache, rash, high fever, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, tremors, convulsions, coma, and paralysis. Individuals who develop any of these symptoms should see their healthcare provider immediately.

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