



# Macon County Public Health

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## Press Release

### Health Director Announces Two Cases of La Crosse Encephalitis in Macon County

Macon County Health Director, Jim Bruckner recently confirmed that two children from the local area have been diagnosed with La Crosse Viral Encephalitis (LAC) in Macon County. One of the children is from the Highlands area of the county and the other child is from the Franklin area. Both of the children were hospitalized, but have now been released and are recovering at home. "These cases are an unfortunate reminder that we all need to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites," said Bruckner. In addition to La Crosse, mosquitoes are carriers of Eastern Equine Encephalitis, West Nile virus, and other diseases. "Thankfully, it is fairly easy for people to protect themselves by applying mosquito repellants and making their home or work environment less attractive to mosquitoes." continued Bruckner.

Stan Polanski, PA of Macon County Public Health said La Crosse symptoms occur from a few days up to two weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito. These symptoms include fever, headache, nausea and vomiting. There may be neurologic symptoms such as confusion or loss of balance and in more severe cases, convulsions or coma may occur. Children and the elderly are the most susceptible to the disease. "Severe cases with invasion of the central nervous system and neurological symptoms occur primarily in children under age sixteen; but fortunately, most persons with Lacrosse recover completely."

With all of the attention that has been focused on West Nile virus this year, some people overlook the fact that there are other mosquito-borne illnesses. "La Crosse Encephalitis is actually the most common mosquito-borne illness in North Carolina, and is found predominantly in the

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western part of the state.” said Bruckner. According to Bruckner, so far this year, there have been no confirmed cases of West Nile virus in Macon County.

Polanski recommended insect repellent and the elimination of mosquito breeding grounds as effective methods for preventing mosquito bites. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend several repellents against mosquitoes – DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535. According to the CDC, oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years old. Consumers should look for products that contain the CDC-recommended ingredients, and should read and follow all label instructions.

“Warm humid weather provides the ideal breeding condition for mosquitoes,” said Bruckner. In addition, he offered the following advice for eliminating mosquito breeding areas:

1. Use “mosquito dunks” in ponds and other bodies of shallow standing water. These dunks are available at home improvement and most farm and garden centers.
2. Install or repair window and door screens so that mosquitoes cannot get indoors.
3. Drain all sources of standing water. At least once or twice a week, empty water from flower pots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans.
4. Check for clogged rain gutters and clean them out.
5. Remove discarded tires that could collect water.
6. Be sure to check for containers or trash in places that may be hard to see, such as under bushes or under your home.

Questions regarding mosquito transmitted diseases may be directed to the Macon County Public Health at 349-2081. Detailed information about insect repellants may be obtained by visiting the Centers for Disease Control website at

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm>.