2005 Guidelines for West Nile Virus Surveillance in Alaska

Background
West Nile virus (WNV) was first detected on the North American continent in 1999 in New York City. Each year thereafter, the disease has infected human, animal, and mosquito populations ever westward. Already in 2005, WNV activity has been detected among avian, mosquito or veterinary populations in Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New York.

Alaska has yet to record local WNV activity in any human, bird or other animal. In past years, cases of imported WNV illness were detected in Alaska among tourists or travelers exposed in states with WNV activity. No one can be sure whether Alaska will continue to remain free of WNV. The Alaska Division of Public Health will continue to work with our partners to conduct WNV surveillance in 2005.

SURVEILLANCE FOR WNV IN HUMANS
Healthcare providers who suspect cases of WNV should contact the Section of Epidemiology at 907-269-8000 (8AM-5PM) or 800-478-0084 (after hours) for consultation about the diagnosis and for information regarding transport of diagnostic specimens to ASVL.

Specimens will be accepted for WNV evaluation ONLY for patients hospitalized with presumptive diagnoses indicative of neuroinvasive disease, such as:

- Viral encephalitis
- Viral meningoencephalitis
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome
- Acute flaccid paralysis

At least 0.5 ml of serum is needed for testing and should be collected at least 8 days after illness onset. Specimens must be kept cool (4°C) prior to, and during shipment.

If you find a dead bird meeting the above species and freshness criteria, DO NOT PICK UP THE BIRD.

Method of Carcass Disposal:
If instructed by a wildlife or public health authority to dispose of a dead bird, use gloves or put your hand inside of a plastic bag to pick up the bird. Double bag the carcass and dispose of it in the garbage.

Method of Carcass Disposal:
If instructed by a wildlife or public health authority to dispose of a dead bird, use gloves or put your hand inside of a plastic bag to pick up the bird. Double bag the carcass and dispose of it in the garbage.