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. In 2003, the number of human cases in the United States exceeded 9,800, more than twice the number of cases recorded in 2002, although the number of deaths seen for both years was similar at approximately 270. So far in 2004, evidence of WNV has been detected in several avian or animal populations in eight states, including California. As well, a single human case of WNV has been reported in Ohio for the current WNV season.

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 907-267-2347 in Anchorage, 907-459-7206 in Fairbanks, or U.S.GS. Call ADFG at 907-267-2347 in Anchorage, 907-459-7206 in Fairbanks, or 907-465-4148 in Juneau, for more information about regional contacts.

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

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

If a person finds 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.

For more information:

- Section of Epidemiology WNV website: http://www.epi.Alaska.gov/id/dod/wnileinfo.stm
- E-mail WNV & wildlife questions to: WNVinfo@fishgame.state.ak.us