

Clinton County Health Department, Environmental Unit

2008 West Nile Virus Bird Submission Policy

To assist in determining the level of risk to humans posed by West Nile Virus (WNV), the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is requesting that residents report all **dead crows, ravens, and blue jays**. With WNV clearly established in the bird population in Clinton County and throughout eastern United States, the need to test all dead birds has diminished. Testing dead birds for WNV is one component of the WNV program. In addition to monitoring dead birds, the CCHD annually implements a mosquito surveillance program conducted by SUNY Plattsburgh students. Mosquitoes are trapped in a number of sites, and samples are sent for testing on a weekly basis. In 2007, 93 mosquito pools (groups of female mosquitoes of the same species from the same location) were submitted with no WNV positive test results. In 2007, CCHD tested 12 birds for West Nile Virus with one crow from the City of Plattsburgh testing positive for West Nile Virus.

It is important to determine the location and number of dead crows on a weekly basis since crows appears to be the most susceptible to WNV. Crows are an early indicator of the level of WNV circulating in an area.

Clinton County residents are encouraged to call (518) 565-4870 from Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM to report dead crows, blue jays, and ravens. These birds are the only species that should be reported at this time. **The CCHD is requesting the assistance of county residents to bring these dead birds to the Department.**

Identifying dead birds for submission:

The focus of the CCHD's bird surveillance program will be crows, blue jays, and ravens. Crows, unlike other black-colored birds, are completely black, including their beak and feet, and are very large, usually over 1-1/2 feet long. Ravens look like a very large crow having the same marking as a crow. Blue jays are a showy blue bird with a head crest, bold white spots on the wings and tail; whitish or dull underparts; and a black necklace.

Specimens acceptable/unacceptable for testing:

The best dead specimen is one that is in good condition, recently died within 24 hours, and has not died from identifiable trauma (gunshot or predator). A good specimen will generally still have its eyes.

Deteriorated birds – those with maggots, noticeable odor of decay or crushed body parts will not be submitted. These birds are considered by the Arbovirus Laboratory to be un-testable for West Nile Virus.

How to safely handle a dead bird:

Use rubber gloves or turn a plastic bag inside out, over your hand to pick up the bird.

- The bird needs to be refrigerated, frozen or placed in a cooler with ice or cold packs. These actions will slow the decomposition process.
- The bird can then be brought to the Clinton County Health Department's Environmental Health Unit at 135 Margaret Street, (Second floor of the Old Surrogate Building) Plattsburgh, NY, from Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.