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ONTARIANS REMINDED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST WEST NILE VIRUS *Hot, Humid Weather Provides Perfect Conditions For Mosquitoes*

TORONTO – The hot, humid weather currently affecting most of Ontario is creating favourable conditions for mosquitoes, which means Ontarians need to continue taking precautions to safeguard against getting West Nile virus, Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, said today.

“Most people may not be too happy about the hot, sticky weather conditions we’ve been experiencing, but mosquitoes love it,” Dr. Basrur said. “This weather provides excellent breeding conditions for mosquitoes. To stay safe and healthy this summer, Ontarians need to be vigilant about protecting themselves against the disease.”

Avoid mosquito bites by:

- Clearing eavestroughs and other artificial water containers (birdbaths, wheelbarrows, cans, etc.) and removing stagnant water around the home
- Using federally registered personal mosquito repellents, such as those containing DEET
- Wearing light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and pants when going outside between dusk and dawn.

“For some people, West Nile virus can cause serious and long lasting illness,” said Dr. Basrur. “These simple precautions should become a part of our regular summer routine.”

A batch of mosquitoes in the Region of Peel tested positive for West Nile virus this week. This is the first positive mosquito batch found in Canada this year.

No Ontario human cases of West Nile virus have been reported yet this summer. It is not uncommon for human cases to appear two to three weeks after virus-positive mosquitoes have been identified.

The number of cases of West Nile virus in Ontario has been decreasing in recent years. Last year, there were 14 cases, compared to 89 cases in 2003 and 394 cases in 2002.

Information on West Nile virus is available through the ministry’s website, www.health.gov.on.ca, or www.HealthyOntario.com. Ontarians can also phone Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY 1-866-797-0007) or their local public health unit.

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