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Focus continues on reducing risk to humans as second bird tests positive for West Nile virus

Edmonton... A magpie found near Medicine Hat has been confirmed as the second case of West Nile virus infection in Alberta. The test result is a reminder that West Nile virus is in Alberta, and although the risk of infection for humans is low, the virus could be contracted anywhere in the province.

Serious illness in humans due to West Nile virus is rare, but it is not always possible to predict which individuals are susceptible to severe effects of the virus. The Provincial Health Office is encouraging all to protect themselves. Simple precautions include:

- Use an insect repellent containing DEET when outside.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when mosquitoes are most active. Light coloured clothing is less attractive to mosquitoes.
- Keep mosquitoes out of your house by fixing broken window or door screens and attic vents.
- Remove standing water in your yard where mosquitoes might lay their eggs.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development will continue testing crows, magpies, jays and ravens until the virus has been identified in all regions of the province. Albertans who find dead birds of these species are encouraged to call their local Fish and Wildlife office or 310-0000 for directions.

Detailed information on West Nile virus and how to protect yourself and your family is available on the Alberta Health and Wellness Web site at <http://www.health.gov.ab.ca>. Factsheets on the Web site include detailed guidelines on the safe use of mosquito repellents.

- 30 -

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Access is available on-line at <http://www.health.gov.ab.ca>

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