

NEWS FROM Legislator

Lou D'Amaro



SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
17th Legislative District
130 West Jericho Turnpike
Huntington Station, NY 11746
Tel: (631) 854-4433
Fax: (631) 854-4415
Lou.Damaro@suffolkcountyny.gov



COMMITTEES:
CHAIR– Budget & Finance
VICE CHAIR – Environment,
Planning & Agriculture
MEMBER – Human Services
MEMBER– Public Safety

For Immediate Release
Contact: Karen Klafter (631) 854-4433

Legislator D'Amaro Urges Local Residents To Report Dead Bird Sightings

(HUNTINGTON STATION, NY... July 9, 2012) – As the summer season enters into full swing, the risk of contracting mosquito-borne infections like West Nile virus, a disease transmitted from birds to mosquitoes that can cause encephalitis and other health problems, dramatically increases. While no local residents have been diagnosed with West Nile this year, the virus has been identified in a crow in Northport and in a sample mosquito pool test in Islip. Accordingly, Suffolk Legislator Lou D'Amaro (D-Huntington Station) is urging all County residents to call the Department of Health Services' Public Health Hotline at (631) 787-2200, Monday through Friday between 9 am – 4 pm if they spot dead birds in their community. Calls made during non-business hours may be left on the phone answering machine.

“As positive tests for West Nile virus are verified, we are asking everyone to keep the Health Department informed about dead bird sightings so the proper authorities can track where the virus is present and take the necessary precautions,” D'Amaro said.

Birds that are prone to being bit by infected mosquitoes, which could indicate the presence of the virus in a given area, include crows, blue jays, hawks, falcons, owls, exotic or unusual bird species. If a resident spots a dead bird of that kind, or peculiar circumstances such as die-offs of multiple birds, they are urged to take action from a safe distance by calling in the sighting.

“If you spot a dead bird in your community that has been there less than 24 hours and shows no sign of other trauma, you should report the sighting on the County's hotline,” D'Amaro said. “The Suffolk County Department of Health Services will be able to identify over the phone

(more)

if it is a bird that requires testing. If the Department determines that testing is not needed, they will provide you with instructions on how to proceed," D'Amaro said.

West Nile virus was first detected in Suffolk County in 1999. Although not everyone who is bit by an infected mosquito will develop the disease, it is a very serious and potentially fatal ailment, D'Amaro said. It is estimated that 20 percent of those who become infected will develop some form of West Nile illness. Mild symptoms include fever, headache, body aches and occasionally a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. It can lead to West Nile encephalitis or meningitis with severe symptoms including high fever, muscle weakness, stupor and disorientation. Since 2001, when the first human case of West Nile virus was identified in Suffolk County, there have been nearly four dozen human cases and several deaths attributed to the disease.

In addition to spotting dead birds that may be carrying the disease, D'Amaro urges all individuals to take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. He suggests making sure windows and door screens do not have holes and tears, trimming overgrown bushes near the home and making sure that stagnant water does not accumulate in bird baths, empty flower pots, abandoned tires or chair cushions. Dump the water in children's pools immediately after use and avoid going outdoors from dusk to dawn – peak mosquito-biting hours. Residents who do go outside at these times of day should wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Insect repellent containing DEET has been proven to be most effective at reducing mosquito bites, assuming they are applied according to manufacturer's instructions.

"We want everyone to have a happy, healthy summer," D'Amaro said. "By being on the lookout for potentially disease-carrying birds and keeping ourselves protected from mosquitoes, we can confidently enjoy all that Long Island has to offer this time of year."

For further information on West Nile virus, visit the Department of Health Services' web site at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/health or call (631) 853-3055.

#

Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro (D-Huntington Station) represents the 17th Legislative District, which includes parts of Huntington Station, South Huntington, Huntington, West Hills, Melville, Dix Hills, Deer Park, North Babylon and West Babylon. He is Chairman of the Budget & Finance committee, Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture committee, and a member of the Human Services and Public Safety committees of the Suffolk County Legislature.