

NEWS FROM Legislator

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

(HUNTINGTON STATION, NY... June 29, 2015) – With the recent positive test of a mosquito in South Huntington for West Nile virus, 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.

“While there is no reason for the public to be concerned, as the first positive test for West Nile virus in Suffolk County has now been verified, we are asking everyone to keep the Health Department informed about possible dead bird sightings so they can track if and where the virus is present and take all necessary precautions,” D'Amaro said.

Birds 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 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.

(more)

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.

In addition to spotting dead birds that may be carrying the disease, D'Amaro advises individuals to take precautions to ward off mosquitos colonizing in and around their homes and also 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. To report mosquito problems or stagnant pools of water in public areas, call (631) 852-4270.

"We want everyone to have a wonderful and safe 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 or medical questions related to West Nile virus, call (631) 854-0333 or visit the Department of Health Services' web site at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/health.

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Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro represents the 17th Legislative District, which includes parts of Huntington, Huntington Station, South Huntington, Melville, West Hills, Cold Spring Hills, Dix Hills, Deer Park, North Babylon and West Babylon. He is chairman of the Budget & Finance committee and a member of the Education & Information Technology and Human Services committees of the Suffolk County Legislature.