

First case of St. Louis Encephalitis Virus confirmed in Lubbock mosquito sample

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LUBBOCK, Texas — On Thursday, the City of Lubbock Health Department confirmed the first case of St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE) this year, found in a sample of mosquitoes collected in Lubbock.

Professor and chair with the Texas Tech Department of Environmental Toxicology, Dr. Steven Presley, said his department tests mosquitoes for West Nile Virus and St. Louis Encephalitis.

A couple of weeks ago we tested a pool and they were positive for both West Nile Virus and St. Louis Encephalitis Virus,” Presley said.

Presley said the mosquitoes with the viral diseases were found in west Lubbock.

We’ve had that unusual period of rainfall and hot weather again,” Presley said. “So mosquito numbers have boomed.”

Presley said SLE was also found last year, and said the concern stems from the unusual nature of the virus. Presley added SLE usually is found every couple years.

It’s always interesting to find it the first time,” Presley said. “From the stand point that, [when] we typically—we find St. Louis Encephalitis virus, it’s kind of unusual.”

Presley said finding both SLE and West Nile Virus in a sample of mosquitoes raises some questions.

So looking at the birds, do they have coinfections of West Nile and St. Louis? We don’t know,” Presley said.

Presley said pets like dogs can’t be affected.

However, the [CDC reports](#) less than 1 percent of SLE infections are “clinically apparent.”

He said symptoms include fever, headache, dizziness, nausea and malaise.

In severe cases, the virus can result in coma or death. According to the CDC, there is no vaccine against SLE and patients with suspected SLE should visit a healthcare provider for treatment.

Presley said the symptoms are very similar to West Nile, and the elderly are more susceptible.

Folks should take particular care,” Presley said.

Presley referenced the “4 Ds:” using mosquito repellent with DEET, avoiding dusk and dawn and draining standing water.

Presley said with the cold coming in on Friday, the mosquito problem will mostly take care of the problem, however, not all of it.

