

West Nile Virus Surveillance Report, 2018: For week ending August 4

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1. West Nile virus transmission risk (week ending August 4, 2018)

- *Culex tarsalis* mosquito numbers continue to rise in southern and central Saskatchewan.
- West Nile virus positive mosquitoes have been increasing over the past three weeks.
- Conditions are optimal for West Nile virus transmission in southern and central Saskatchewan (zones 2, 3, and 4).
- Mosquitoes are most active on warm evenings and between dusk and dawn. Take precautions against getting bitten. Use mosquito repellents, cover up, and limit time outside during peak times of mosquito activity.

The risk of acquiring West Nile virus (WNV) infection in humans depends on various factors including time of year, number and location of infected *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes, and number of days with sufficient heat. *Culex tarsalis* is a common summer mosquito throughout the agricultural portions of Saskatchewan, and is abundant in the southern areas of the province where it is hotter and drier. It is rarely found in the northern forested areas.

The risk of WNV transmission is low in the spring but often rises through the early and midsummer period, reaching a peak during the latter part of July and August.

The WNV risk levels may vary from minimal, when *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes are rare and the weather has not been conducive for virus to cycle in mosquitoes and birds, to high when there are high numbers of infected mosquitoes and the weather and habitat conditions have been optimal for mosquito development, biting activity and transmission of the virus to humans.

Risk levels are determined in Saskatchewan through mosquito surveillance indicators such as *Culex tarsalis* numbers and infection rates, degree day or heat accumulation and other relevant weather factors such as precipitation.

The level of risk in mosquitoes is determined by using infection rates in mosquitoes (expressed as the number of infected mosquitoes/1000) and risk index calculated as: the infection rate X the average *Culex tarsalis* per trap night/1000).

Other relevant factors that help determine risk to humans include: time of year, the status of mosquito larval populations, past and predicted weather patterns, adult mosquito population age and trend, proximity to populated areas and other indicators such as positive birds or horses.

West Nile Virus Risk

Minimal - The mosquito species that carries WNV has not been detected. This does not mean risk is zero.

Low - The mosquito species that carries WNV has been detected in small numbers. There is a low probability of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

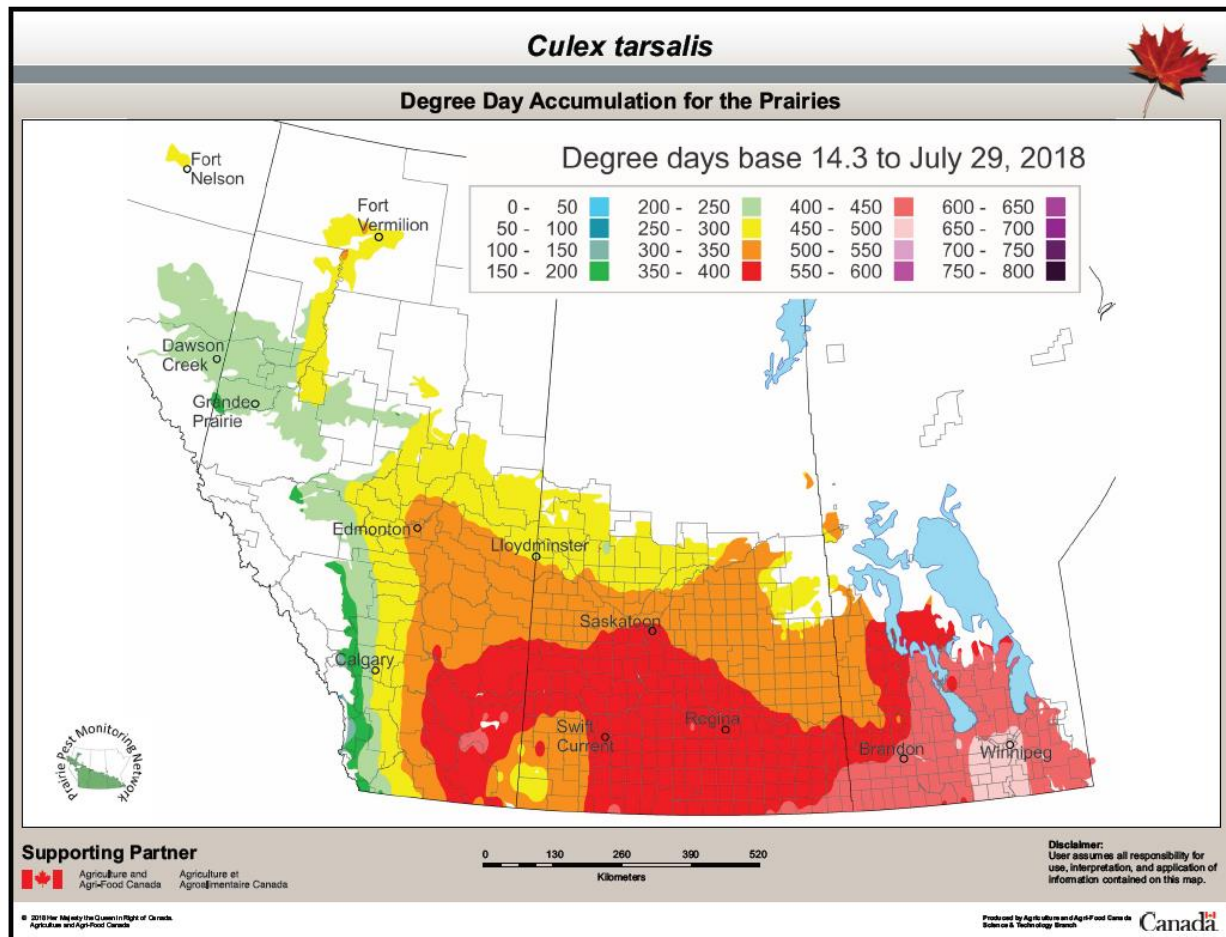
Moderate - WNV mosquitoes have been detected in numbers where there is a moderate probability of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

High - High numbers of WNV positive mosquitoes have been identified and are widespread. There is an increasing and high probability of being bitten by an infected mosquito.

2. Degree day accumulations

- The rate of degree day accumulation has progressed steadily throughout southern and central Saskatchewan. This favours *Culex tarsalis* biting activity and West Nile virus transmission.
- The highest accumulation of degree days this season, to date, has been in southeastern and south central Saskatchewan with over 400 degree days accumulated in the southeast (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Degree day accumulations Prairie Provinces (July 29, 2018)



Note: The map covers the agricultural portion of Prairie Provinces. There is more habitat and higher numbers of *Culex tarsalis* in the southern portion of this area. *Culex tarsalis* is rarely found in forested areas. Map courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada.

Degree day: a measurement of heat accumulation from April 1. The threshold temperature below which WNV development and transmission is unlikely to occur in *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes is 14.3°C. Degree days are calculated by subtracting the threshold or base temperature from the daily mean temperature. These are then summed to provide the total accumulation for the season.

Example: Mean daily temperature = 19.3°C; threshold temperature = 14.3°C; $19.3 - 14.3 = 5.0$ degree days.

Degree days are used in two ways. First, during the season a running total of accumulated degree days is recorded. On average, it takes

approximately 250 to 300 degree days (base 14.3° C) before the second generation of *Culex tarsalis* emerges. Females of this generation are most numerous and are largely responsible for transmission of WNV to humans. A total of 109 degree days are required for virus development to be completed within a particular population and for potential transmission to occur. The risk of WNV transmission increases with increasing degree day accumulation. Moreover, consistently warmer temperatures will significantly shorten virus development time in the mosquitoes. This increases the potential risk of WNV transmission, if the virus is present and other conditions are favourable.

3. Mosquito surveillance results, 2018

- *Culex tarsalis* mosquito numbers continue to increase throughout southern Saskatchewan and are becoming a larger proportion of the total mosquito population. Biting activity and virus transmission has increased with the return of warm evening and night-time temperatures. This will continue with the warmer temperatures forecasted for the next week. While infected mosquitoes have been found in southern Saskatchewan, they may be present in other areas of the province.
- The numbers of *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes are lower in areas that have received very little rainfall in June and July (particularly in southwestern Saskatchewan).
- While the numbers of other nuisance mosquito species are low or declining, the risk of West Nile virus has increased due to the increasing numbers of infected *Culex* mosquitoes.

Number of *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes

Table 1: Average* number of *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes captured by date and ecological risk area, 2018

Week Ending	(1) Boreal Forest [‡]	(2) Boreal Transition [§]	(3) Moist Mixed Grassland/ Aspen Parkland	(4) Mixed Grassland
Jun 9	-	-	0.89	1.33
Jun 16	-	-	0.97	1.16
Jun 23	-	-	0.53	0.86
Jun 30	-	-	24.55	1.05
Jul 7	-	-	25.97	2.15
Jul 14	-	-	36.86	17.00
Jul 21	-	1.25	52.42	15.53 [¶]
Jul 28	-	10.00	41.82	37.20 [¶]
Aug 4				
Aug 11				
Aug 18				
Aug 25				
Sep 1				
Sep 8				
Average	-	5.63	23.00	9.54 [¶]

Notes:

*Average numbers are determined by dividing the total number of *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes caught by the total number of trapping nights.

‡ Due to extremely low numbers of *Culex* mosquitoes, trapping is generally not done in the Boreal Forest ecological risk area. This habitat is not suitable for this species.

§ Trapping does not begin in the Boreal Transition ecological risk area until mid-July.

¶ Results are subject to change as not all trap samples were submitted to the identification laboratory last week. They will be included in next week's report.

Number of mosquito pools testing positive

Table 2: Number of WNV positive mosquito pools *, percent positive pools and total number of pools tested by date and ecological risk area, 2018 ‡

Week Ending	(2) Boreal Transition §			(3) Moist Mixed Grassland/ Aspen Parkland			(4) Mixed Grassland			Weekly Totals		
	Positive	Tested	%	Positive	Tested	%	Positive	Tested	%	Positive	Tested	%
Jun 9	-	-	-	0	8	0	0	7	0	0	15	0
Jun 16	-	-	-	0	10	0	0	8	0	0	18	0
Jun 23	-	-	-	0	10	0	0	7	0	0	17	0
Jun 30	-	-	-	0	36	0	0	9	0	0	45	0
Jul 7	-	-	-	0	46	0	0	9	0	0	55	0
Jul 14	-	-	-	3	60	5.0	0	19	0	3	79	3.8
Jul 21	0	3	0	1	72	1.4	0	20 [¶]	0	1	95 [¶]	1.1
Jul 28	0	5	0	4	61	6.6	1	27 [¶]	3.7	5	93 [¶]	5.4
Aug 4												
Aug 11												
Aug 18												
Aug 25												
Sep 1												
Sep 8												
Total	0	8	0	8	303[¶]	2.6	1	106[¶]	0.9	9	417[¶]	2.2

Notes:

* **Mosquito Pool** - Mosquitoes of the same species collected from the same trap on the same date are pooled together for the purposes of laboratory testing. *Culex* mosquitoes (including *Culex tarsalis*, *Culex restuans* and *Culex territans*) collected from one trap on a given night are placed in pools of 1 to 50 mosquitoes for WNV testing. Other species, most notably *Culiseta inornata*, are occasionally placed in pools and tested as well. When more than 50 mosquitoes are collected from the same trap, multiple pools are tested. A positive pool refers to the detection of WNV in one or more mosquitoes collected from a given trap.

Percent positive pools are calculated as follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Number of positive pools})}{(\text{Total number tested})} \times 100 = \text{Percent positive pools}$$

‡ Due to extremely low numbers of *Culex* mosquitoes, trapping is generally not done in the Boreal Forest ecological risk area. This habitat is not suitable for this species.

§ Trapping does not begin in the Boreal Transition risk area until mid-July.

[¶] Results are subject to change as not all trap samples were submitted to the identification laboratory last week. They will be included in next week's report.

4. West Nile virus surveillance in animals, 2018

Infections in animals such as horses are seasonal and often occur later in the season. The virus is well established in mosquito vectors in Saskatchewan. As WNV infections in horses lag behind infections in mosquitoes, mosquito surveillance provides more timely information about the risk to the general public. Infections in horses can provide an indication that infections in humans may be occurring as well.

Table 3: Number of West Nile virus positive horses by date and ecological risk area, 2018

Week Ending	(1) Boreal Forest	(2) Boreal Transition	(3) Moist Mixed Grassland/ Aspen Parkland	(4) Mixed Grassland	Weekly totals
Jun 9	0	0	0	0	0
Jun 16	0	0	0	0	0
Jun 23	0	0	0	0	0
Jun 30	0	0	0	0	0
Jul 7	0	0	0	0	0
Jul 14	0	0	0	0	0
Jul 21	0	0	0	0	0
Jul 28	0	0	0	0	0
Aug 4					
Aug 11					
Aug 18					
Aug 25					
Sep 1					
Sep 9					
Total	0	0	0	0	0

5. West Nile virus surveillance in humans 2018 and 2003–2017

Human infections are not an indicator of risk of transmission of West Nile virus from mosquitoes during the summer season. The vast majority of infections are not detected because persons have no symptoms and do not have laboratory testing.

Table 4: West Nile virus surveillance in humans, 2018 (as of week ending July 28, 2018)

Number of WNV Positive Lab Tests*	WNV Neuroinvasive Disease ‡	WNV Deaths
1	0	0

Notes:

* Includes tests done by the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory and Canadian Blood Services. Personal information including clinical symptoms and exposure histories is not available. There may be multiple positive tests for one person. A positive laboratory test does not necessarily indicate a current WNV infection - it may show a WNV infection from the previous year or a cross-reaction with other viruses. As WNV infection may be transmitted through blood products, Canadian Blood Services screens all blood donations.

‡ The most useful indicator for the burden of disease in the general population is WNV neuroinvasive disease. About 1 in 5 people who are infected develop a fever and other symptoms. About 1 out of 150 infected people develop a serious, sometimes fatal, illness. The vast majority of people with WNV infections do not seek medical care.

Table 5: Saskatchewan Human West Nile virus neuroinvasive cases 2003–2017*

Year	Neuroinvasive Cases	Deaths
2003	63	7
2004	0	0
2005	6	3
2006	3	0
2007	76	6
2008	1	0
2009	0	0
2010	0	0
2011	0	0
2012	0	0
2013	7	1
2014	1	0
2015	0	0
2016	0	0
2017	1	0
Total	158	17

Note:

*Deaths are included in WNV Neuroinvasive disease case numbers except for 2003 when two deaths occurred in people with non-neuroinvasive West Nile Fever.