

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Douglas County Farm Bureau hosted Environmental Stewardship Day

The 27th Annual Douglas County Environmental Stewardship Day, sponsored by the Douglas County Farm Bureau was held Thursday, September 9 at Walnut Point State Park near Oakland. This event is for sixth-grade students in Douglas County. Due to Covid, the 2020 event was canceled and students, teachers, and presenters

were eager to return to this fun event. Many of the students enjoyed the hissing cockroaches and specimens of ticks and millipedes. Students were able to touch a turtle, observe native fish, and view specimens of native mammals. Thomas Hintz, Site superintendent of Lincoln Trail and Walnut Point State Parks makes a

nature walk fun and informative for the students. The significance of bees with the environment and pollination was a popular topic. The importance of having a fishing license and obeying regulations along with managing our state's aquatic resources was stressed by the team from the University of Illinois Natural Resources and Environmental

Sciences department. We believe that it is crucial that students are aware of their contribution or influence on the environment. Many speakers encourage the students to enjoy nature while stressing not to idly destroy or damage habitats. This event impacted 268 sixth-grade students, 13 teachers, 11 speakers, and 35 volunteers.

The seven schools attending were Arthur, Atwood, Lovington, Shiloh, Oakland, Tuscola, and Villa Grove, for a total of over 265 students. Speakers were from Illinois Department of Natural Resources, University of Illinois Master Naturalists, Natural History Survey of the University of Illinois, University of Illinois Extension,

Douglas Hart Nature Center, and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Douglas County Farm Bureau. The event relies on a dependable group of volunteers from Tuscola Rotary and Tuscola Kiwanis to lead the groups of students to each station and help ensure this day is a success.



Left: Sixth graders at Villa Grove attended the Environmental Stewardship Field Trip at Walnut State Park on September 9 hosted by the Douglas County Farm Bureau. Right: Sixth graders at East Prairie Middle School attended Environmental Stewardship Field Trip at Walnut State Park last week hosted by the Douglas County Farm Bureau.

West Nile Virus is confirmed in Moultrie County by Ill. Dept. of Public Health

The Moultrie County Health Department (MCHD) has recently been notified by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) that a bird specimen submitted from Moultrie County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). The specimen was collected in the Kirksville area on September 29, 2021. Once a bird, animal or human in any county has tested positive for WNV, the entire county is considered positive for WNV.

WNV is most commonly spread to people and animals by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected as they feed on infected birds. People who become infected with WNV may develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea or rash. Most people recover from WNV completely but may experience fatigue or weakness for weeks or months after their illness. WNV can also develop

into more severe illness which affects the brain and spinal cord, resulting in high fever, headache, neck stiffness, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. Recovery from severe illness may take several weeks or months. Individuals over age 60 and those with chronic health conditions or suppressed immune systems are most susceptible to WNV infection. **To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, the MCHD strongly**

recommends that everyone:
 * Eliminate or routinely change standing water on their property, including buckets, birdbaths and tires in order to prevent mosquito breeding opportunities.
 * Treat large bodies of standing water (such as ponds) with mosquito dunks.
 * Wear mosquito repellent containing DEET.
 * Mend holes in window screens.
 * Remain indoors dur-

ing dusk and dawn hours, when mosquitoes are most active.
 * Wear light colored clothing. Dark colors attract mosquitoes.
 WNV is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the continental United States, and is most active from mid-April through October. If you have questions pertaining to WNV or need assistance with managing large areas of standing water on your property or if you

need to report a mosquito nuisance, please contact the Moultrie County Health Department at (217) 728-4114. For more information on West Nile virus illness and prevention tips, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>. For information on the current case numbers and statistics for WNV in Illinois, please see <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/west-nile-virus/surveillance>

IDPH adopts CDC recommendations for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine boosters

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is adopting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommendation for a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in certain populations and a booster dose for those in high risk occupational and institutional settings.

CDC recommends the following groups should receive boosters:
 * people 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings should receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series,
 * people aged 50-64 years with underlying medical conditions should receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series.
Additionally, CDC recommends the follow-

ing groups may be considered for boosters.
 * people aged 18-49 years with underlying medical conditions may receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks, and
 * people aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting may receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual

benefits and risks. "While the vaccines continue to be highly effective at preventing severe illnesses, hospitalization, and death, as we learn more about COVID-19 and the science evolves, so too must our recommendations," said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "Scientists and medical experts

continue to monitor vaccines for waning immunity and how well the vaccines protect against new variants, and across which age groups and risk factors. The information reviewed by the FDA shows that there is clear evidence of the benefit of booster doses at this time."

for exposure to COVID-19 or the complications from severe disease. Individuals may contact their health care provider or visit www.vaccines.gov to find a nearby location to receive a booster dose. Right now, only the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is authorized for booster doses in recommended populations. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has given full approval for Pfizer-BioNTech, marketed as Comirnaty, for those ages 16 years and older. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccines are the same vaccine.



IDPH recommends vaccine providers prioritize those at highest risk of severe illness among the eligible booster population. Many of the people who are now eligible to receive a booster shot received their initial vaccine early in the rollout and will benefit from additional protection. The Delta variant continues to be the predominant virus circulating and with cases of COVID-19 increasing significantly across the United States, a booster shot will help strengthen protection against severe disease in those populations who are at high-risk

Data is expected to be submitted soon to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on the safety and efficacy of booster doses for Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines for further recommendations on booster doses.

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