By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

Last week five out of six tested pools of mosquitoes in Chase County tested positive for West Nile virus, according to Myra Stoney of Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SNPHD).

Last Friday Stoney said that her surveillance nurse in the SNPHD area, which covers eight counties, has not had any cases of human West Nile virus reported to her.

However, at least one adult in Imperial, who did not wish to be identified, tested positive for the virus recently. The person could have had West Nile in the past but didn't currently have it.

Stoney, Director of SNPHD, said her office only hears of cases if someone currently has the virus. Exposure to the virus in the past isn't reported, she said.

About four out of five people who are infected with West Nile will not show any symptoms at all.

Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected have symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

One in 150 people will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

To avoid mosquito bites, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services recommends:

Applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus;

Wearing long-sleeved shirt, pants and socks;

Avoiding going out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active; Eliminating standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites.

More information on West Nile virus may be found at the web site www.swhealth.ne.gov or by calling the McCook office at (308) 345-4223.