

*Remarks for the
West Nile Virus Press Conference
June 13, 2003*

- Recognize Dr. Amy / Dr. Slavinski
 - Thanks for good work in public health in Mississippi

The impact of the West Nile Virus in our state is serious. Last year, 12 Mississippians died from this virus. This year, we are again focusing our efforts on educating the public on importance of protecting themselves against this serious health threat.

Our response to challenges posed in dealing with this virus will be measured and taken with a clear understanding of the facts about the virus and its possible prevention.

Last year, we received funding from the Centers for Disease Control to assist in our education efforts through the Department of Health. We will continue this year to pursue every possible source of funds to assist with education and help communities with mosquito control efforts.

As we move forward with the “Fight the Bite” educational effort, I encourage all Mississippians to be aware of their surroundings and take preventive measures against mosquitoes.

Begin by removing any standing water around your property. Every few days, change out the water from birdbaths, food and water dishes for your pets, or from other containers that contain standing water. This makes it more difficult for mosquitoes to lay eggs and breed.

As much as possible, remain inside during the peak hours of mosquito activity, which is usually between dusk and dawn.

If you are going to be outside, wear long sleeves and long pants, and exercise special caution with children and infants.

If you choose to use an insect repellent, use one with DEET – and please be careful to follow the directions carefully, especially as they apply to using repellents with children.

Spraying operations have also begun against the mosquitoes. This spraying is being done to control the mosquito population, but I want to stress that the spraying is not harmful to humans.

We are going to do everything we can to monitor this situation and ensure the public's health, but our success in this effort also depends on the public's awareness regarding this virus.

Let's work together to make it a fun and safe summer.

Thank you.