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TALKING ABOUT WEST NILE VIRUS PREVENTION & CONTROL - OPPORTUNITY FOR A PUBLIC CONVERSATION ABOUT IPM

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In 1999 West Nile Virus emerged as a mosquito-borne threat to public health in the Northeast United States. Since then--and as its range has expanded throughout the US, into five provinces of Canada, and likely into Central and South America, affecting wildlife, farm animals and people--West Nile Virus has garnered four seasons of intense media coverage and the focused attention of several high-level government agencies.* While the terms of the debate have rarely been in the traditional parlance of Integrated Pest Management, the issues of environmental, health and financial risk reduction are familiar. Because of sustained public interest, the costly experience of an emergency response, and increased attention to public health in the context of biosecurity, the development and implementation of West Nile Virus prevention and control plans afford an excellent opportunity for introducing and reiterating the principles and practices of IPM, both in the media and with policy-makers across a spectrum of government agencies and disciplinary foci.

*At the Federal level, these agencies include the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institute of Health, all in the Department of Health and Human Services; the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services in the Department of Agriculture; Geological Services and National Wildlife Health Center in the Department of the Interior; and the Environmental Protection Agency.