

The West Nile Weekly

What does this week look like historically?

Historically, around 92% of total cases for the year, 9 in 10, have been transmitted by the end of this week. In 2012, a late year for WNV in SD, this was the last week before a large decline in cases.

What to expect?

We expect 2 counties to report cases this week - risk is down just slightly from risk last week (Fig. 1). Risk this week is average or below average in all of the state's counties, when compared to this week in other years (Fig. 2). We have had some unexpectedly cool days recently, which have pushed estimated risk to low-normal for this point in the year.

We are on the lookout for cold snaps that will put an end to the season. Counties in the north of MN have already seen unusual weather cold enough to kill off some mosquitoes and to put an end to their WNV cycle for this year, but here in SD we expect it to continue for at least a few more weeks.

Current recommendations?

At this point in the year we propose watchful waiting for the human case data. Recent updates from the SD Department of Health show large increases in case counts. The numbers will continue to climb even while actual risk is declining, and will likely not settle down until a few weeks into October.

It is also a good time to ensure that all data have been entered and reported, and that none of the numbers look unusual. From our perspective everything seems sensible, but individual counties will want to review the quality of their data for future use.

Spraying insecticides or recommending the use of personal protections, like bug spray, will prevent a handful of cases, but resources should not be used for WNV at this point in the year unless there are new indicators of risk in the data. There are of course other public health concerns, and we worry that excessive messaging about a dwindling WNV cycle will court message fatigue in our population.

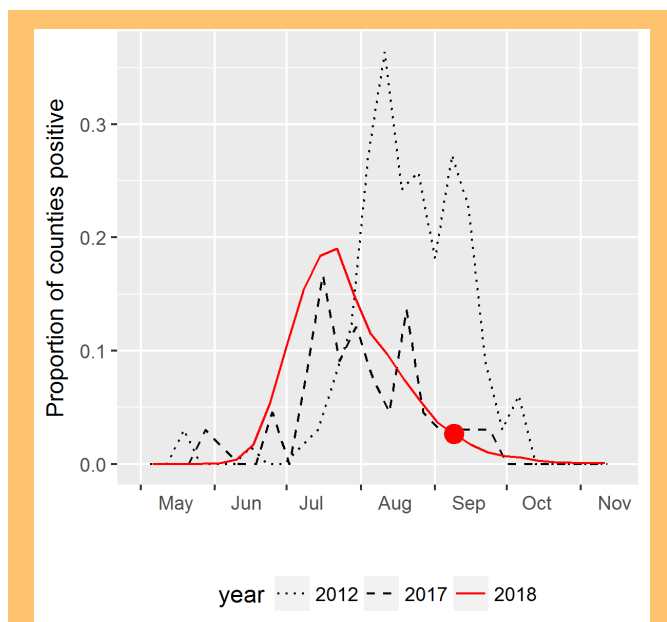


Figure 1: Estimated risk in 2018 with this week emphasized by a dot. This year is compared to cases observed in 2012 (dot) and 2017 (dash).

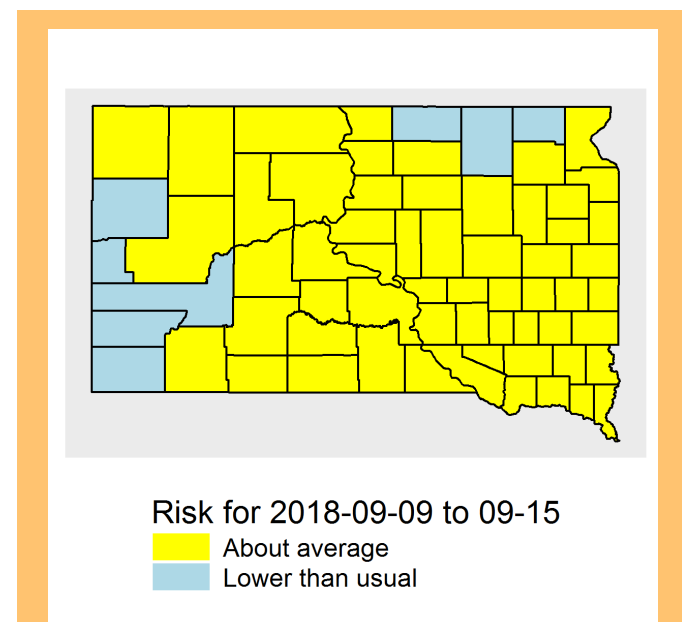


Figure 2: Risk for this week, compared to risk in this county, this week, in the average WNV year.