

PHSA Laboratories

BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

June 20, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Organ Donor Testing for West Nile virus (WNV) - Routine testing of organ donor samples should begin as of July 1, 2022

WNV is a seasonal infection in Canada typically causing human infections during the summer or early fall. Most infections acquired in Canada have occurred in August to late September. In 2009, WNV infected mosquitoes and human cases were first identified in the Okanagan. There was no locally acquired human or animal WNV cases since 2019; however, in 2021, two travel-related human cases were reported, no animals tested positive for WNV in BC in 2021. Please note that there has been no active mosquito surveillance performed since 2015 in BC. Sporadic human and animal WNV cases continue to be reported every year in neighboring US states such as Washington State.

As you know, WNV can be transmitted by blood products or organ donations from a WNV infected donor typically during the incubation period which is approximately 3 to 14 days after infection. As a result Canadian Blood Services tests all blood products for WNV RNA.

The decision as to when during the season to perform WNV testing of solid and non-solid organ donors is based on a risk assessment of the transmission probability. For example, WNV testing of solid and non-solid organ donors is not recommended in BC during the fall and winter months (October to June) when mosquitoes, the vectors are not present.

Please note that if the donor has a WNV risk factor, e.g., recent travel to or residence in areas where WNV transmission occurs year round such as Florida, California or other Southern USA States; or lives in, or visited other endemic regions around the world, WNV PCR will be performed on request.

Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have any concerns.

Sincerely,



Mel Krajden, MD, FRCPC
Public Health Laboratory Director
Program Head, Virology
BCCDC Public Health Laboratory



Muhammad Morshed, PhD, SCCM
Clinical Microbiologist
Program Head, Zoonotic Diseases & Emerging Pathogens
BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

cc. K. Mooder
Q. Wong
E. Galanis

A. Jassem
B. Auk

B. Jackson
L. Hoang

