

# Harlan man dies of West Nile Virus

By Scott Rank  
News Reporter

**HARLAN** -- The West Nile virus claimed the life of a Harlan man, the first West Nile death in Iowa of 2004.

William Brower fit the description that the Iowa Department of Public Health released July 8 of the West Nile victim: a Southwest Iowa man in his 60's. According to Dr. Mary Hansen, department director, he became ill and died while hospitalized.

Brower, 62, a former carpenter and truck driver, died June 27 at VA Medical Center in Omaha. He mowed rest areas near Interstates 80 and 29 under contract from the Iowa Department of Transportation with his daughter, Tammy Less of Omaha.

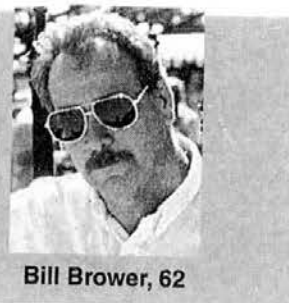
Less said the effects of West Nile took hold of her father very rapidly.

"To the best of our knowledge he was healthy. He had high blood pressure, but it was under control and in every other respect he was healthy."

"It happened very, very suddenly," she said.

Less said Brower most likely contracted the virus from a mosquito bite while mowing an interstate rest area. He was outside frequently during the summer and had high exposure to insects.

"It probably was from mowing, although he was outside trap shooting and those kind of things, so we'll never know for sure," she said. "I feel that during the mowing at some point, a mosquito got



Bill Brower, 62

him."

Less said her father became sick very rapidly. They were mowing two rest areas on opposite sides of the interstate. Halfway through mowing the rest stop, Brower stopped and said he couldn't finish.

"That was really unlike Dad — he didn't let stuff get him down," she said. "He wasn't feeling well at the time, to the point that I drove the vehicle. In the three summers I have worked with him, he's never let me drive the vehicle towing the mowers."

On June 21, Brower was admitted to the hospital with symptoms that mimicked viral meningitis. He died six days later and his autopsy revealed the cause of death as West Nile.

When he was first admitted to the hospital the family had no reason to believe Brower had West Nile since the odds of contracting the virus are extremely low.

"It's like winning the lottery — he just hit the wrong one," said Mark Brower, his son.

Brower is only the second fatality from West Nile virus reported this year. The first death was in

Arizona July 1. Last year, Iowa had 147 human cases of West Nile, six of whom died.

According to the Center for Disease Control, there is currently one

person diagnosed with West Nile in Nebraska and nobody diagnosed in Iowa.

West Nile is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus while feeding on an infected bird. The illness is not spread person-to-person, nor from bird-to-person.

Reports of West Nile typically peak around August and September. Patricia Quinlisk, microbiology professor at Iowa State University, said there's nothing alarming about the 2004 data on West Nile cases.

"This is the time of year we saw our first case last year. While we've only had two years of experience with West Nile, we don't see anything particularly different this year."

Less offered advice to those working outside — to use insect repellent with DEET and keep as covered as possible.

"Potentially, if we had both used OFF insect repellent, it might have prevented it from happening. I encourage people to take that extra precaution, and use products with DEET in them."

*about July 9 or 13  
Harlan paper.*