



Contact: Karen S. Mellor, Entomologist

42624 6th Street East
Lancaster, CA 93535
(661) 942-2917

Karen@avmosquito.org

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 2003

FIRST SIGNS OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Lancaster – The Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has reached Los Angeles County. Karen Mellor, District Entomologist, stated that a dead crow found in Arcadia on September 3, 2003 has tested positive for the potentially fatal disease. The bird was picked up by the San Gabriel Mosquito and Vector Control District and sent to the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab in Davis for initial processing. Laboratory tests conducted at the University of California at Davis Arbovirus Diagnostics Laboratory found WNV in tissue samples.

Many species of birds get infected and die from West Nile virus. The public can participate in the extensive virus monitoring effort of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) by reporting birds that have recently died. CDHS has established two toll-free lines: 877-WNV-BIRD – for dead bird reporting, and 866-847-2246 – for general information on West Nile virus.

The first signs of WNV showed up in several sentinel chickens and mosquito samples in the Salton Sea area last month. To date 44 chickens from seven flocks in Imperial and Riverside Counties have tested positive for WNV. Additionally one chicken in Imperial County showed signs of infection with St. Louis Encephalitis for the first time last week. There has also been a report of mosquitoes from San Diego County, which were positive to Western Equine Encephalitis earlier this month.

The testing of sentinel chickens and mosquitoes are part of a statewide surveillance system for mosquito-borne diseases such as WNV, St. Louis (SLE) and Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE). This system has been in place for several years and has been boosted this year for the anticipated arrival of WNV.

Nationwide there have been 3541 human cases of WNV with 66 deaths this year. There have been several human cases of WNV in California, but all of them were likely infected with the virus while traveling in other states.

The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District is continuing a surveillance program with sentinel chickens and adult mosquito trapping. District technicians control mosquitoes in breeding sources, such as street curbs and gutters, roadside ditches, and retention basins. Technicians also inspect and treat a number of neglected pools and spas.

Individuals can further reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking the following precautions:

- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Drain and clean birdbaths, wading pools, water troughs etc. at least once a week. Keep pools chlorinated.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Avoid activity outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.
- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Call your local Mosquito & Vector Control District to report stagnant water sources (e.g. neglected pools).

The District also provides mosquito eating fish free of charge to residents for fish ponds, unused swimming pools, water troughs, and other permanent standing water sources.

Additional information about West Nile virus in California can be found at www.westnile.ca.gov or www.dhs.ca.gov.

For further information, please contact the District at (661) 942-2917 or visit our website at www.avmosquito.org. Our services, literature, and educational presentations are available at no charge to our residents.