



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
& Vector Control District**
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NEWS RELEASE

– **For Immediate Release**

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Contact:

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First Human Case of West Nile Virus in the Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) has received notification from the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services that this year's first human case of West Nile Encephalitis has been detected in an Antelope Valley resident. The 70-year old man from Lancaster had traveled to Arizona and Lake Powell a week before onset of symptoms. He most likely contracted the disease from an infected mosquito there. Laboratory tests conducted by the CDHS Viral and Rickettsial Diseases Laboratory in Richmond confirmed that the potentially deadly West Nile Virus has infected a San Bernardino County resident. The 40-year-old woman sought medical care in May for fever, muscle aches, headache, backache and diffuse rash. She has since recovered.

“This constitutes a very early start of the season, as we have already seen in the findings from dead birds and mosquitoes. We didn't have a human case last year until mid August in California,” said District Entomologist Karen Mellor. So far this year, WNV has been found in 284 dead birds, including 123 in Los Angeles County, 122 in San Bernardino County, 35 in Riverside County, three in Orange County and one in Ventura County. In addition, the virus has been detected in 25 "pools" of mosquitoes collected in Los Angeles and Riverside counties and six sentinel chickens located near the Salton Sea in Riverside County.

Health officials emphasized that the risk of serious illness to humans is low. Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Approximately 10 percent to 15 percent of infected individuals will have only mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. Less than one percent of individuals will develop serious neurological illness such as encephalitis and meningitis. The elderly and those with lowered immune systems are more susceptible to serious illness.

The virus is spread by mosquitoes, which feed on the blood of infected birds and then pass it on to humans or other animals. West Nile Virus is not spread by person-to-person contact or by handling dead birds. The dead bird surveillance is an early warning system for the range of the virus. The public is asked to help by reporting recently deceased crows and ravens by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD. Use gloves, a shovel or an inverted trash bag to pick up any dead bird.

The AVMVCD is increasing their surveillance and will be starting an additional surveillance program for areas that are not currently covered by their services. Since there are a lot of potential breeding sources in people's backyards sources that we are unaware of, we are asking every resident to contribute to the program to keep our community healthy.

Here are a few easy suggestions to reduce mosquitoes in your yard and your neighborhood:

- * Change timers of automatic sprinklers to winter settings.
- * Winterize unused swimming pools - hyper-chlorinate and cover in-ground pools, drain and store aboveground pools.
- * Get rid of standing water – That’s where immature mosquitoes live. Empty out all small containers at least once a week, keep pools and spas chlorinated or drained, repair all water leaks and avoid over-watering. Anything that holds water longer than a week is a potential mosquito producer.
- * Get mosquito-eating fish (*Gambusia affinis*) for free, if you have sources that cannot be drained (e.g. fish ponds, pools, large horse troughs).
- * Wear long sleeved shirts and pants and use mosquito repellent containing DEET when outdoors during dusk and dawn. Always follow instructions on the product label.
- * Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.
- * Horse owners should also make sure their horses are properly vaccinated, to avoid losing them to WNV.
- * Report stagnant pools and other backyard sources to the AVMVCD, so they can treat the mosquito breeding sources accordingly.

For any further questions or services please feel free to contact the Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District by phone (661-942-2917) or check us out online at www.avmosquito.org. For more information about WNV or to report dead birds, visit the California Department of Health Services website <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>.

ATTENTION: Conference call for news media only to respond to questions about the first confirmed human case of West Nile virus in California in 2004.

WHO: Participants Include:

- Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson, Public Health Officer, California Department of Health Services (CDHS)
- Dr. Carol Glaser, Acting Chief, CDHS Viral Laboratory, Richmond
- Vicki Kramer, Chief, DHS Vector-Borne Disease Section
- Jim Felten, Public Health Director, San Bernardino County

WHEN: Tuesday, June 8, at 1 p.m.
Toll-free telephone number: (888)-323-2717
Leader’s Name: Ken August
Pass Code: West Nile