



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

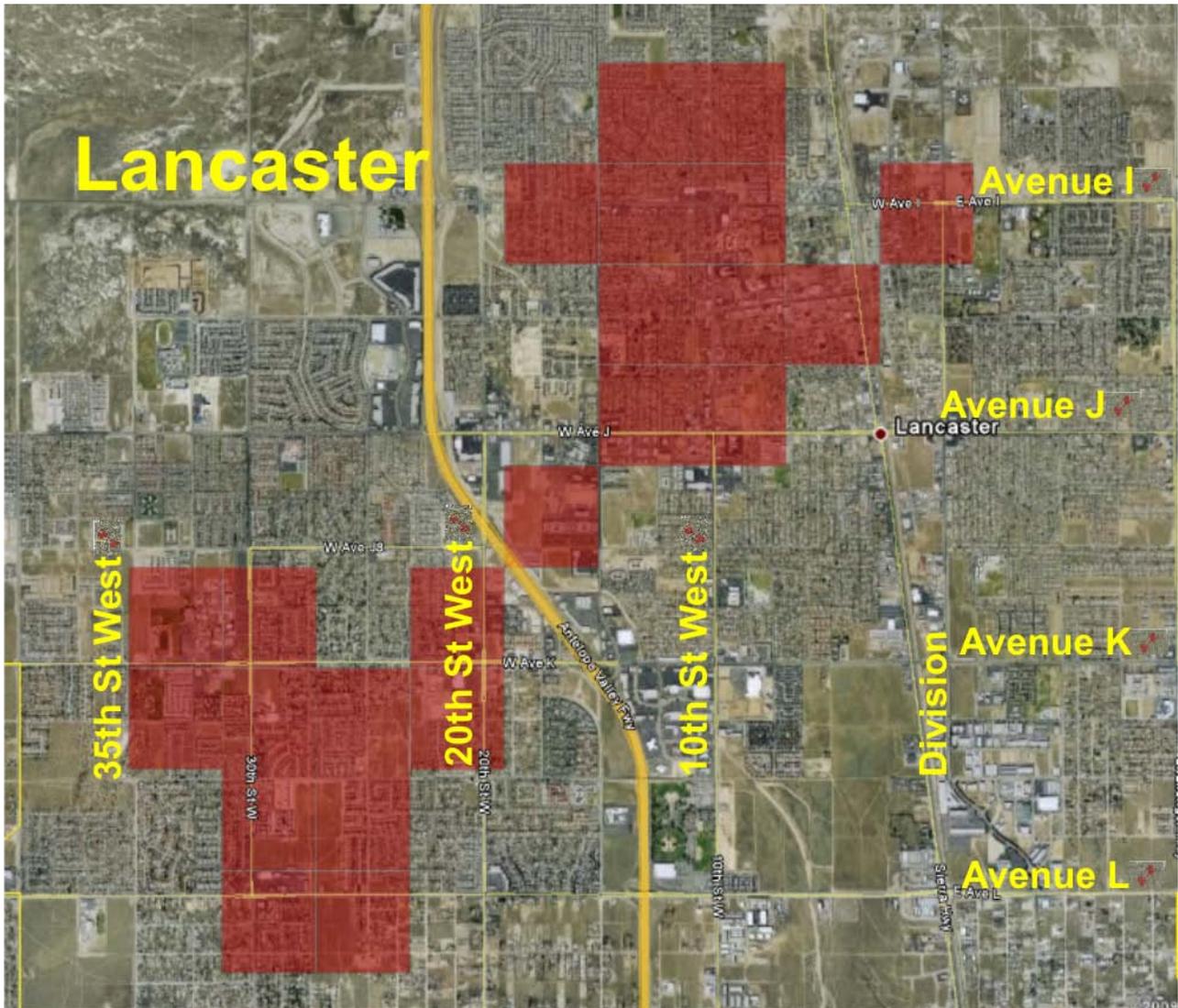
Cei Kratz – District Manager
Karen Mellor – Entomologist

Elevated West Nile Virus Risk in Lancaster

Lancaster, CA –The Statewide West Nile virus (WNV) DYCAST surveillance system has noted significant clusters of dead birds being reported in two areas of Lancaster in recent days. Additionally, a chicken at a sentinel flock near 15th Street West and Avenue I has just tested positive. Currently the California Department of Health Services is conducting extra tests to differentiate between West Nile and St. Louis encephalitis viruses. This increased activity raises the level of concern for all areas in the Antelope Valley.

DYCAST (Dynamic Continuous-Area Time Space model) is a surveillance tool managed by the California Department of Public Health which analyzes dead bird reports from watchful residents to the State’s West Nile Virus Hotline. Clusters usually predict increased WNV activity in the area by several weeks, and serve as an early warning tool which mosquito control districts take very seriously.

“This system helps us pinpoint potential problem areas which we use to focus our search for mosquito breeding sites and control efforts as early as possible” noted District Manager Cei Kratz.



“With Independence Day coming up, we want to remind our residents to be safe while watching the fireworks,” District Entomologist Karen Mellor said. “Since that is prime time for mosquito activity, it is important to prevent bites by using effective repellents, and wearing long sleeves and pants.” Residents are encouraged to continue to report any dead birds to the California West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov . Not all birds will be tested, but the data is vital in tracking and controlling the virus

So far this year 15 Counties in California show WNV activity in 62 dead birds, 81 mosquito samples, 3 chickens and one tree squirrel. To date in the Antelope Valley 2 birds and one person tested positive for the virus, with the final results pending on a chicken. At this time last year there

were 818 birds, 63 mosquito samples, and 2 chickens from 19 Counties reported to be positive for WNV.

West Nile Virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. Although most people that are infected do not show any symptoms, West Nile Virus is a potentially debilitating disease. District officials urge residents to take individual responsibility, and remember the 3 D's protect yourself and your family from West Nile Virus:

- * DRAIN all standing water – Empty out small containers at least once a week, keep pools and spas chlorinated or drained, and repair all water leaks. Conserve water and prevent mosquito breeding.
- * DUSK and DAWN – are peak activity times for mosquitoes.
- * DEFEND yourself - wear long sleeved shirts and pants and use mosquito repellents containing DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, or IR3535 when outdoors during mosquito activity. Always follow instructions on the product label. Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.

Also remember to:

- * get FREE mosquito-eating fish (*Gambusia affinis*) for fish ponds, pools, and horse troughs.
- * vaccinate your horses properly.
- * report stagnant pools and other backyard sources to the AVMVCD.
- * report dead birds by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov.

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.