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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MOSQUITO DISTRICT REPORTS FIRST WEST NILE POSITIVE RAVEN IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY**

Lancaster – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District has received confirmation that West Nile virus (WNV) has arrived in the Antelope Valley, District Entomologist Karen Mellor announced today.

A dead raven that was found in Pearblossom and submitted to the California Department of Health Services' Dead Bird Surveillance Program on 10/31/03 has tested positive for West Nile Virus. The bird was picked-up by Lancaster Animal Control personnel. Although the Pearblossom area is not within the boundaries of the Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District, but it shows that the virus is present and will certainly be spreading throughout the Antelope Valley next spring.

West Nile Virus is transmitted from birds to other animals and humans by mosquitoes. With the cold weather that we've been having since the end of October, the mosquito population has diminished and the transmission of the virus is getting less likely. Residents of the Antelope Valley are usually safe from the mosquito bites in the wintertime, but come spring, everybody has to do their share to help minimize mosquito breeding sources. "This is especially true for the areas not covered by the AVMVCD", Mellor said. "Residents in the more rural areas of Pearblossom, Lake LA and Littlerock tend to have property with livestock and that usually means water troughs that are great potential breeding sites for mosquitoes."

During the mosquito season (March through October) the AVMVCD conducts a surveillance program with sentinel chickens and adult mosquito trapping. District technicians control mosquitoes in breeding sources, such as roadside ditches and gutters, catch basins, flood control channels, coastal marshes, underground drains, and natural rainwater depressions.

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

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

- Avoid activity outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- 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.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- 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 public can participate in the extensive virus monitoring effort of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) by reporting birds that have been dead for less than 24 hours. 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. During the winter months the hotline is only accepting the most susceptible birds (crows & ravens) for WNV testing.

Additional information about West Nile virus in California can be found at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov).

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