



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

– **For Immediate Release**

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West Nile Virus Infected Chicken Found in the Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) has received confirmation from the California Department of Health Services Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory (VRDL) that antibodies to West Nile Virus (WNV) have been detected in a blood sample from a chicken in Lancaster. The chicken flock with the infected mosquito is located near the old fairgrounds in Lancaster. The District has 8 flocks of sentinel chickens that are placed throughout the Antelope Valley to detect mosquito-borne viruses such as WNV, St. Louis Encephalitis and Western Equine Encephalitis.

This is the first chicken in the State that has been infected with WNV this year. So far the virus has been detected in 19 dead birds and 8 mosquito samples from 8 Counties within the State, but there have been no reports of human illness to date. The first signs of WNV returning to Los Angeles County were three groups of mosquitoes that tested positive in Santa Clarita and the San Fernando Valley last week.

“Memorial Day marks the official start of summer, but that means we also have to remember to think about mosquitoes and the diseases that they might carry,” says District Manager Cei Kratz. “The best way to keep mosquitoes at bay is to remove all stagnant water and wear repellent while outside on a cool summer night.”

The recent rainstorms have filled up a lot of unused swimming pools that are usually dry. This has increased the possible mosquito breeding areas. AVMVCD technicians already check some of those pools, but others go unnoticed. Residents are encouraged to report unkempt pools, spas and other backyard water sources to the District so they can check and treat them.

West Nile Virus is here to stay and residents are urged to take individual responsibility for the protection of their families and animals. Here are a few easy suggestions to reduce mosquitoes in your yard and your neighborhood:

- * Make sure your sprinklers are set in a manner that will allow the ground to dry completely before the next cycle. Conserve water and prevent mosquito breeding.
- * Get rid of standing water – Empty out all small containers at least once a week, keep pools and spas chlorinated or drained, and repair all water leaks.
- * Get FREE mosquito-eating fish (*Gambusia affinis*) if you have sources that cannot be drained (e.g. fish ponds, pools, large horse troughs).
- * Wear long sleeved shirts and pants and use CDC recommended mosquito repellents 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 make sure their horses are properly vaccinated.
- * Report stagnant pools and other backyard sources to the AVMVCD.

The public is asked to help with West Nile Virus surveillance and control efforts by reporting dead birds by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov. Birds that are not picked up by the end of the day can be safely discarded in the trashcan using gloves, a shovel or an inverted trash bag to handle them.

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.