



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
& Vector Control District**
42624 6th St. East
Lancaster, CA 93535
(661) 942 – 2917

NEWS RELEASE

– For Immediate Release

March 23, 2005

Contact:

Karen Mellor, Entomologist
Karen@avmosquito.org

Second Chance Offered West Valley

Lancaster, CA – “One again we are giving property owners in Quartz Hill, Rancho Vista and west Palmdale the opportunity to protect themselves from West Nile Virus,” reports R Dennis Persons, president of the Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District Board of Trustees. The Board voted unanimously at its meeting March 22 to hold another election giving those residents a chance to vote themselves into the mosquito protection district at a cost of \$6.40 to \$9 a year.

“This opportunity will not present itself again in the near future,” Persons warned, “if the citizens of the threatened area vote it down again.”

Cei Kratz, District Manager of the District added, “We held an election in 2003 and it failed by a small margin. We are experiencing a serious increase of West Nile Virus this year throughout the state, affecting both people and animals – especially horses. We’re very concerned about the residents in the areas not receiving mosquito control,”

There were a total of 830 West Nile virus infections reported from 23 counties in California in 2004, with 27 fatalities. There have been no reports of human illness due to WNV in 2005, yet West Nile virus has been detected in 19 California Counties in 2005. After closer investigation an earlier report of a human case in eastern Los Angeles County was included in the 2004 count. “All indications are that this will be a serious local threat this year,” said Karen Mellor, District Entomologist.

Evidence of interest on the part of west valley citizens has been solicited through petitions circulated by the Quartz Hill Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, certain businesses and concerned residents. A telephone survey was also conducted by District staff members. A report to the Board on Tuesday evening indicated 54% of the people polled were “very interested” in joining the District, 20% were “somewhat interested”, and 13% each answered that they were “not too interested” or “not at all interested”. Interestingly, the last question in the survey asked whether the citizens would be vote in favor of joining the District and 87% of the responses were YES.

Following the Board’s approval on Tuesday night, the District will now proceed with the legal process and have an “Intent Meeting” on April 26, then mail the ballots the next day. Ballots are due back on June 28 and will be opened after the public hearing to be held that day. A simple majority of the weighted ballots is considered a positive vote.

If this measure is passed, the property owners in those areas will be charged a benefit assessment fee of \$6.40-9 (plus consumer price index) each year on their property tax bill, and will align them with the rest of their neighbors who are already in the District. This money is exclusively to fund

the A.V. Mosquito and Vector Control District services and can not be used for any other city, county or state agency. “We are a ‘Special District’ and are not affiliated with any other government agency. Just like water or school districts, we have our own boundaries and are funded strictly through the Benefit Assessments to perform specific protective services for willing property owners within our boundaries,” Kratz said.

West Nile 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 birds (except for pigeons, doves and chickens) 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.

Because of the heavy rains this spring, there is a great deal of standing water throughout the valley that can be potential breeding places for mosquitoes. All citizens 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:

- * With all the rain the Antelope Valley has had, make sure to turn off your sprinkler system, it saves money and keeps plants from getting too much water.
- * 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 – 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.