



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
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NEWS RELEASE – **For Immediate Release**

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West Nile Virus Returns to the Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) has received confirmation from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) that a dead sparrow has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV).

This is the first sign of WNV in the Antelope Valley this year. The bird was found near Avenue L and 15th Street West in Lancaster by a resident and reported to the dead bird hotline. “There has been a considerable increase in West Nile Virus throughout the State and the Nation this year compared to last” says District Manager Cei Kratz. Earlier this month Governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency in several Counties because of the high number of human cases.”

Throughout the State, the number of cases is climbing dramatically and has already affected 48 Counties. Statewide, WNV has been detected in 717 dead birds, 673 mosquito samples, 189 chickens, 16 horses and 147 humans, and has already resulted in 8 fatalities. So far in Los Angeles County, 43 mosquito samples, 35 dead birds, one chicken, as well as 4 humans have been confirmed positive for the virus. One person has also died from the WNV infection.

In order to deal with the increasing problem of green pools in the AV the District has pulled out the “big guns” and has hired a company to take aerial pictures of the area to spot those backyard health hazards.

“We are now equipped with pictures and addresses of almost 1200 swimming pools that look suspicious from the air,” said District Manager Cei Kratz. “We are cross-referencing this information with the list of pools we already know about and are checking the new ones.”

Residents are urged to clean or drain their pools, before the Vector Control Technicians pay them a visit, since it poses a Public Health threat and could also get expensive. If the home owner does not take any action, the AVMVCD is empowered by the California Health and Safety Code to fine them up to \$1,000 per day until the problem is fixed.

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 for the protection of their families and animals. Here are a few easy suggestions to reduce mosquitoes in your yard and your neighborhood:

- * 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).
- * 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.
- * Wear long sleeved shirts and pants and use mosquito repellents containing DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus 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.