



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
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NEWS RELEASE

– For Immediate Release

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AV Horses show signs of West Nile Virus

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) was informed that one horse on the Eastside of Lancaster and a horse in Rosamond were diagnosed with West Nile Virus (WNV).

The 8year-old mare from East Lancaster showed mild symptoms on 10/4/04 and was quickly diagnosed and treated for WNV. It has since recovered. It had been vaccinated twice in 2003 and received another booster shot in 2004. This series of vaccinations saved the horse from more serious illness possibly resulting in death.

The Rosamond horse was not as lucky. It had never been vaccinated and started to show symptoms in early September, which included fever, inability to stand and hypersensitivity. It had to be euthanized 5 days after onset.

This shows how important it is to vaccinate horses properly and make sure they receive the appropriate boosters as necessary. Make sure you check with your veterinarian to keep your horse protected.

“Although the season is starting to slow down as the nights are getting colder, it is not over, yet. Therefore it is still important to make sure to protect yourself and your horses from mosquito bites and West Nile Virus,” said District Entomologist Karen Mellor.

Signs of West Nile Virus in horses include stumbling, staggering, wobbling, weakness, muscle twitching or inability to stand. Horses, like humans, contract the disease from mosquito bites and are not contagious to other horses or to people. Not every horse exposed to the virus will develop symptoms. Of the horses that do, approximately 30-40 percent will die. For more information on WNV relating to horses check the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) website http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/wnv_info.htm.

As of 10/7/04 the California Department of Food and Agriculture reported 471 infected horses in California, of which 202 died or had to be euthanized. As of 10/12/04 the California Department of Health Services reported a total of 732 human West Nile virus infections and 19 fatalities in California. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported 1951 human cases and 62 deaths nationwide.

The 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 crows and ravens by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov. Due to the high volume of calls about dead birds we are only picking-up crows, ravens, jays and birds of prey. All other birds can be safely discarded in the trashcan. Use gloves, a shovel or an inverted trash bag to pick up any dead bird.

We are asking the public to help us find mosquito breeding sources that we can't see, such as neglected swimming pools, dirty ponds and fountains and other standing water in backyards and on private property, so that we can check and treat them if necessary.

Here are a few easy suggestions to reduce mosquitoes in your yard and your neighborhood:

- * 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.
- * 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 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.