



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

– **For Immediate Release**

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West Nile Virus re-appears 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 local district utilizes 8 flocks of sentinel chickens that are strategically placed throughout the Antelope Valley to detect mosquito-borne viruses such as WNV, St. Louis Encephalitis and Western Equine Encephalitis.

So far this year there have been no reports of human illness due to WNV, but it has been detected in different animals from 22 Counties within the State. To date 72 dead birds, 3 mosquito pools, 1 horse and 2 sentinel chickens have tested positive for WNV. The first positive chicken was found in Ontario on February 15th. Until now no other chickens in the State have shown any signs of infection.

“Unlike dead birds, which might have picked up the virus somewhere else before they die, our sentinel chickens are stationary and so we know they were infected by mosquitoes at that location,” says District Entomologist Karen Mellor. “We will be increasing our surveillance in that area, to see which mosquito species is responsible for transmitting the virus.”

The heavy winter rains 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 the locations of such pools, but others go unnoticed. Unless the District is notified by a resident, neighbor or another agency about a bad pool, they can't check or treat them.

“This emphasizes the importance of mosquito control and surveillance,” says District Manager Cei Kratz. “That is why we have decided to give the residents on the Westside another chance to join

the District.” On May 27th ballots were mailed to all property owners in the Quartz Hill and Rancho Vista area and they will have the opportunity to vote if they want to receive the services that the District offers. The ballots are due back on July 12th and 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.

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.

All 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 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 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.

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.