



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

– For Immediate Release

January 25, 2006

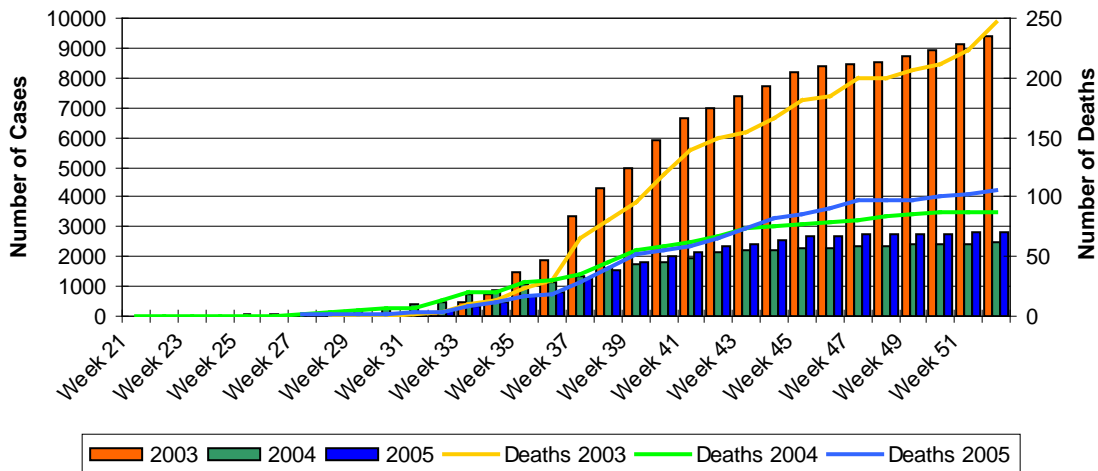
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## Comparison Shows Mosquito Control Is Working In California

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control Districts (AVMVCD) Board of Trustees had their first meeting of the year on Tuesday January 24, 2006. During the meeting District staff informed the Board about their ongoing efforts to get ready for the upcoming season of mosquitoes and diseases.

District Entomologist Karen Mellor illustrated (see graph below) the effect that over 50 well-organized Vector Control Districts had on the numbers of human West Nile Virus (WNV) infections in California. The graph clearly shows that in 2004 and 2005 the total number of human cases were less than one third of the people affected by WNV two years earlier. In 2003 Colorado led the Nation with 2947 (32%) of 9122 cases from 45 States.

**Human WNV Cases in the US  
 2003 - 2005**



At that time Colorado had a very limited mosquito abatement program and they had not taken the threat of WNV seriously enough to prevent this outbreak. With a population of only 4.66 million, these numbers mean that about 64 of every 10,000 people were infected by WNV. In comparison, California led the Nation in 04 and 05 with an infection rate of 2.3 and 2.6 of every 10,000 people.

“I attribute that decline in human cases mainly to the preparation California has been conducting since West Nile Virus was first detected in 1999 in New York,” District Manager Cei Kratz said. “With over 50 well organized and collaborating Vector Control Districts, several Health Departments and other local agencies we were ready to fight this

Manager Kratz also reported that the District would attend the upcoming Home and Garden Show to inform the public about vector-related issues. She also said that although Kern County is looking into the possibility of creating a mosquito abatement district in Tehachapi and Rosamond, that the process would take a few years, and that in the meantime the AVMVCD would continue to provide services to Rosamond through a contract with Kern County Roads Department.

Keith White, Field Supervisor, showed the Trustees the two new vehicles that the District was able to buy with the money from the State grant and one that the District had purchased with their own funds. Two of the vehicles are right-hand drive Jeeps that will be used to treat curbs and gutters in Lancaster and Palmdale and will replace a 1988 Nissan and a 1993 Chevy. He had made several modifications to one of them already in order to keep the driver separated from the pesticide tank and the Trustees were able to compare the two side-by-side.

District Entomologist Karen Mellor gave a summary of the 2005 West Nile Virus season and the numbers of people and animals that were affected nationwide and in California. Nationwide there were 2,819 human cases with 105 fatalities and California was leading the States by far. The final tally for California was 927 human cases with 18 fatalities and 456 horses, 3,046 dead birds, 793 sentinel chickens and 1,242 mosquito pools tested positive for WNV.

She also reported that the District has resumed to pick up dead birds in the area and send them to the Department of Health Services (DHS) for testing. “DHS just reported a dead crow that was picked up on January 10<sup>th</sup> in Saratoga, Santa Clara County, has tested positive for WNV”, Mellor said. “This is the very first indication of WNV in California for 2006.”

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](http://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](http://www.avmosquito.org).