



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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First Fatality due to West Nile Virus in the Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has informed the Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) about the first fatality attributed to West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in the Antelope Valley. The elderly woman was hospitalized with encephalitis in mid September and died earlier this month.

The California Department of Public Health has also reported a second mosquito sample that tested positive for WNV. It was collected in a trap near 25th Street East and Avenue K. Currently the total number of WNV cases in the Antelope Valley stands at 11 chickens, 3 human cases with one fatality, 3 birds, and 2 mosquito samples.

“Older adults and those with weakened immune systems are at greater risk for complications and death from West Nile Virus than others,” District Entomologist Karen Mellor said. “It’s important to remember that West Nile Virus can affect anybody. We continue to urge people of all ages to take precautions, such as removing pools of stagnant water around their homes and using an insect repellent when outdoors in mosquito-prone areas, especially around dawn or dusk.”

Throughout California 46 Counties show WNV activity in 2,319 dead birds, 1,839 mosquito samples, 452 chickens, 26 horses and 27 squirrels. So far this year 329 people have tested positive for WNV, eight of those were fatalities. At the same time, in Los Angeles County, 115 people, 425 dead birds, 476 mosquito samples, 88 chickens, and 10 tree squirrels have been confirmed positive for the virus. Los Angeles County accounts for three of the State’s eight deaths.

West Nile Virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. 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, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, or IR3535 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.