



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

– **For Immediate Release**

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West Nile Virus in North America

Lancaster, CA – Karen Mellor, entomologist for the Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District, will attend a conference on “West Nile Virus in North America: Five Years Later, Lessons to be Learned” which will be held in Ontario April 20-22. The conference is sponsored by the Southern California Vector Control Districts in an ongoing effort to learn about the troublesome and deadly virus and how to control it.

Experts from Hawaii to Canada, and as far away as Australia, will address issues involving WNV in California, its incursion into Canada, its emergence in Mexico, and its potential globalization; the impact of WNV on blood banks and Public Health including discussions on the current status of a WNV vaccine; and other vital studies during the three-day conference.

“Of particular interest to our Valley,” says Mellor, “are discussions on vector surveillance and control for WNV and other arboviruses in Southern California and a special session reporting on a five-year study of WNV in horses including lessons in clinical disease, treatment and prevention. The more we learn, the better we’re able to combat this invasion of disease-bearing mosquitoes.”

Mellor will be giving a full report back to the Board of Trustees of the A.V. Mosquito and Vector Control District at its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 26 at 4:00 p.m. at its offices at 42624 6th St. East in Lancaster. The Board will also adopt a resolution to conduct a Proposition 218 election for the annexation of the Quartz Hill / West Palmdale area at that time. All District meetings are open to the public.

The next day ballots will be mailed to all property owners in the area in question and they will have the opportunity to vote if they want to join the District. The ballots are due back on June 28 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.

In 2004 there were a total of 830 West Nile virus infections reported from 23 counties in California with 28 fatalities. There have been no reports of human illness due to WNV in 2005, yet, but it has been detected in other animals in 20 California Counties. To date 51 dead birds have tested positive for WNV, with one Barn Owl that was found at Edwards Air Force Base on March 13.

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.

Because of the heavy rains this spring, there is a great deal of standing water throughout the valley that can be potential breeding places for mosquitoes. All citizens 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 – 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.
- * 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.