



**Antelope Valley Mosquito
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NEWS RELEASE

– For Immediate Release

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More Evidence Of West Nile Virus In The Antelope Valley

Lancaster, CA – The Antelope Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District (AVMVCD) was informed that 4 more chickens from the coop in West Lancaster that has already shown evidence of West Nile Virus (WNV) have sero-converted. The AVMVCD also received confirmation that a dead crow that had been submitted on 8/19/04 from that same area. According to reports from Edwards Air Force Base two dead birds that were picked-up in Edwards have also tested positive for WNV.

To date no human or horse cases have been reported in the Antelope Valley.

As of 9/10/04 the California Department of Health Services reported a total of 486 human West Nile virus infections and 13 fatalities in California. The California Department of Food and Agriculture reported 253 infected horses, of which 115 died or had to be euthanized in California. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported 1309 human cases and 35 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.

The chance that any one person is going to become ill from a single mosquito bite remains low. The risk of severe illness and death is highest for people over 50 years old, although people of all ages can become ill. About 80 percent of the people who become infected will show no symptoms at all. The milder form of the infection can include fever, headache, and body aches, and can last for as short as a few days, to several weeks. About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, coma, and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

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.