



West Nile Virus Awareness Month

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that infects birds and other animals and can be fatal to humans. There were a total of 830 WNV infections reported from 23 countries in California in 2004, and of those, 27 were fatalities. WNV has been detected in 19 California Counties in 2005. The heavy rain storms early this year may have added to the danger because the marshy wetlands and standing waters left by the storms provide excellent breeding grounds for mosquitoes. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to stop the spread of the WNV threat.

Some Basic Facts

West Nile Virus is transmitted to animals and humans through a mosquito bite. However, most mosquitoes are not infected with WNV and even infected mosquitoes may not transmit WNV to every human they bite. But mosquitoes are also capable of transmitting other diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever. Human-to-human transmission of WNV does not result from close contact, but has occurred with blood transfusion and organ transplants.

Signs and Symptoms

- Most individuals infected with WNV will not experience any illness at all. Only one in five will have mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches.
- For those who do get sick, the signs of WNV will be felt within 3-14 days of a mosquito bite and they generally last a few days.
- The elderly are at greatest risk for developing a more severe disease such as meningitis or encephalitis.

Animal Infection

Horses can get WNV and so can other mammals such as dogs, cats, and squirrels because most of them spend their time outdoors. Bird infections and deaths usually precede the detection of human cases, so dead birds or dead crows are an excellent indicator of local presence of the West Nile Virus.

You can help the county and state's monitoring efforts for West Nile Virus by reporting any dead crows, ravens, magpies, jays, owls and hawks by calling 877-747-2243 or 877-WNV-BIRD.

Protect Against Mosquito Bites

- Avoid spending time outside during dawn and dusk; those are the times when mosquitoes are most active.
- Avoid heavily wooded areas or marshy wetlands.
- When you are doing outdoor activities, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts to protect yourselves.
- Use insect repellent products which contain the active ingredient of DEET or Picaridin.

Protect Your Home Against WNV

- Get rid of all sources of standing water on your property. Even a small amount of water in a flowerpot saucer is enough for mosquitoes to breed.
- Change the water in wading pools, birdbaths and pet bowls several times a week.
- For ornamental ponds, get fish that eat mosquito larvae.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens.
- Repair or replace screens that have holes or tears.
- Contact your local mosquito control agency if there is a serious mosquito problem where you live or work.

To learn more about the disease and ways of prevention, please visit: www.lapublichealth.org or <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>