



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov>

PH07-19
IMMEDIATE

DATE: August 3, 2007
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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES FIFTH DEATH THIS YEAR DUE TO WEST NILE VIRUS

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today announced that a Kings County woman has died after being exposed to West Nile virus (WNV). She is the fifth WNV fatality in California this year.

“Sadly, we have seen that a mosquito bite can lead to tragic results,” Horton said. “I urge all Californians to take precautions—such as draining standing water, applying insect repellent containing DEET, limiting time outdoors during dawn and dusk and wearing protective clothing—to reduce the risk of West Nile virus exposure.”

Yesterday, Governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency in the counties most affected this year by the virus—Kern, Colusa and San Joaquin. The emergency proclamation makes additional funding available for WNV prevention activities in counties like Kings as needed. Since taking office, Governor Schwarzenegger has invested more than \$16 million to fight West Nile Virus.

California has one of the most comprehensive West Nile Virus surveillance and control systems in the U.S. The state deploys surveillance and detection technology to track specific areas of West Nile Virus activity and alert local agencies so they can target their mosquito control activities.

To date this year, WNV activity has been detected in 42 of California’s 58 counties. 64 individuals from 15 counties, including the five who have died, have become ill after exposure to WNV.

Kern County accounts for 38 of the reported WNV illnesses. Other counties have reported the following numbers of illnesses: Butte, 2; Colusa, 1; Fresno, 5; Glenn, 2; Imperial, 1; Kings, 1; Mendocino, 1; Merced, 3; Sacramento, 1; San Joaquin, 2; Santa Clara, 1; Shasta, 1; Sonoma, 1; Stanislaus, 4.

WNV also has been detected in 502 dead birds, 317 mosquito samples, five horses, 29 chickens and five squirrels.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.

The most effective ways for individuals to prevent exposure to mosquito bites and WNV are:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions.
- Ensure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure and avoid spending time outside at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also indicate that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

For more information about WNV and to report dead birds and tree squirrels, visit www.westnile.ca.gov or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).

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