



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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

PH08-34
IMMEDIATE

DATE: June 20, 2008
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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES FIRST CONFIRMED HUMAN WEST NILE VIRUS CASE IN 2008

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today announced that a Tulare County woman has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) infection, the first reported human case in California this year. She was not hospitalized and is recovering.

“The first human West Nile virus infection of 2008 underscores the importance of taking precautions to protect from mosquito bites,” Horton said. “Californians should use insect repellent and eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.”

To date this year, WNV activity has been detected in 19 of California’s 58 counties. In 2007, the first human case in California was reported on June 20th.

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

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.

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

- **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep the mosquitoes from biting you. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
- **DRESS** – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure.
- **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at this time. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.
- **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

California's WNV Web site – www.westnile.ca.gov – includes the latest information on WNV activity in the state. In order to help identify WNV activity, Californians are encouraged to report all dead birds and dead tree squirrels on the Web site or by calling toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).

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