

WHAT IS THE CALIFORNIA WEST NILE SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM?

The California Department of Health Services (DHS) has coordinated a statewide mosquito-borne encephalitis surveillance program since 1969 to detect western equine encephalitis (WEE), St. Louis encephalitis (SLE), and other viruses. In 2000, DHS and other agencies expanded the program to enhance the state's ability to detect West Nile virus (WNV). Reporting and testing of dead birds was added to the California surveillance system that includes encephalitis case detection, mosquito testing, and monitoring of sentinel chickens.

Human Case Surveillance

Individuals who are experiencing symptoms of West Nile virus should contact their health care provider or clinic. The California Department of Health Services and local public health departments provide testing for West Nile virus. Health care providers should contact their local public health department to discuss requirements for testing or visit www.westnile.ca.gov for more information.

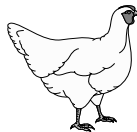
Mosquito Testing

Mosquitoes throughout the state are collected and tested for the presence of WNV, WEE, and SLE viruses. Local mosquito and vector control agencies also monitor the abundance and type of mosquitoes.



Sentinel Chicken Testing

Over 200 chicken flocks are strategically placed throughout the state and are tested routinely during the mosquito season to detect evidence of infection from WNV, WEE, or SLE viruses. Chickens do not get sick from these viruses.



Animal Case Surveillance

Horses and raptors (e.g. emu and ostrich) with encephalitis are routinely tested for WNV, WEE, and other mosquito transmitted diseases. Animal owners should consult a veterinarian if their animal is ill.

Dead Bird Surveillance

California began to test dead crows and related birds for WNV in 2000. Reporting dead crows and other birds helps identify where the virus is occurring in California. In 2004, West Nile virus positive dead birds were found in all 58 counties in California. State agencies, private organizations, and individuals participate in the surveillance program by reporting dead birds.

WHAT DO I DO IF I SEE A DEAD BIRD?



If you find a dead bird, particularly a crow, jay, magpie, raven, sparrow, finch, or raptor, please file an online report at www.westnile.ca.gov or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD. Dead bird reports are very important because they are usually the first indication of virus activity in an area, and allow the state and local officials to monitor the virus throughout the year.

If the bird does not meet the criteria for testing, it will not be picked-up and can be disposed of in an outside garbage can. Do not handle the dead bird, or any animal, with your bare hands. Use a shovel, gloves, or inverted plastic bags to handle the bird and place it in a plastic bag, then dispose of it in the trash.

West Nile Virus Information and Dead Bird Reporting

For more information or to report a dead bird visit:

www.westnile.ca.gov

or call

1-877-WNV-BIRD

Division of Communicable Disease Control
California Department of Health Services

WEST NILE VIRUS PREVENTION & CONTROL

To decrease exposure to mosquitoes and the infections they may carry:



Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property because standing water provides a place for mosquitoes to develop.



Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.



If you do go out apply insect repellent containing DEET according to label instructions.



Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.



Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

Published by the State of California
California Department of Health Services
Division of Communicable Disease Control
Sacramento, CA
(916) 552-9730
www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/dcdcindex.htm

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Revised April 2005

THE CALIFORNIA WEST NILE VIRUS SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

West Nile Virus



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

For more information:
www.westnile.ca.gov or
1-877-WNV-BIRD



WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

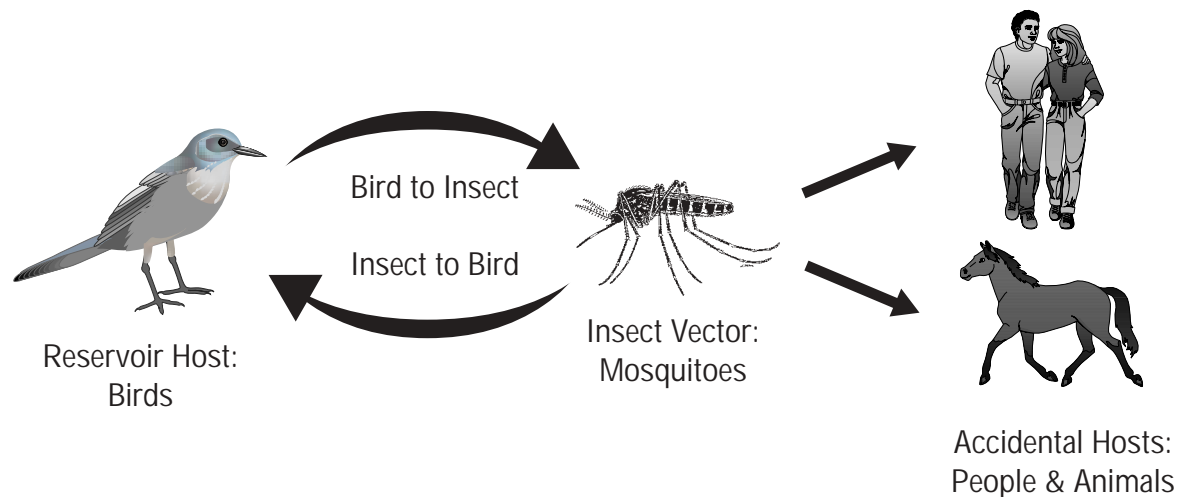
West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus commonly found in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. West Nile virus was first introduced into the United States in New York City in 1999. West Nile virus is transmitted to people and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito acquires the infection by feeding on a bird with virus in its blood. In California in 2004, West Nile virus was found throughout the state. There were 830 human West Nile virus cases detected, and 28 people died.



HOW DO PEOPLE & ANIMALS GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus is usually transmitted to people and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Some species of birds, such as crows and jays, are very susceptible to the virus and are more likely to die from infection. Horses are also very susceptible to West Nile virus and approximately one-third of horses that become ill have died or been euthanized.

TRANSMISSION CYCLE OF WEST NILE VIRUS



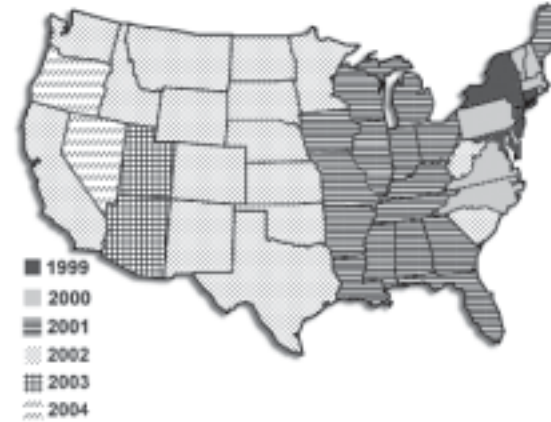
WHAT IS THE RISK OF GETTING SICK FROM WEST NILE VIRUS?

People over 50 have a higher chance of getting sick when infected with WNV. Also, they are more likely to develop serious symptoms of West Nile virus if they do get sick and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites.

Being outside means you're at risk. The more time you spend outdoors, the greater chance you have to be bitten by an infected mosquito. Take precautions to avoid mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing.

Risk of transmission through medical procedures is very low. All donated blood is checked for West Nile virus before being used. The risk of getting West Nile virus through blood transfusions and organ transplants is very small, and should not prevent people who need surgery from having it. If you have concerns, talk to your doctor.

Spread of West Nile Virus in the United States 1999-2004



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN PEOPLE?

Serious Symptoms in a Few People. Less than 1 percent (about one in 150) of the people infected with West Nile virus will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent.

Milder Symptoms in Some People. Up to 20 percent (about 1 in 5) of the people who become infected will display symptoms which can include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms generally last for just a few days, although some people have been sick for several weeks.

No Symptoms in Most People. Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with West Nile virus will not show any symptoms at all.

Call your doctor or clinic if you have questions.

WHICH ANIMALS GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

An infected mosquito can bite any animal, but not all animals will become sick. The disease most often affects birds but may occasionally cause disease in other animals.

Birds

Wild birds serve as the main source of virus for mosquitoes. Infection has been reported in more than 225 bird species. Although many birds that are infected with West Nile virus will not appear ill, West Nile virus infection can cause serious illness and death in some birds. The most severe illnesses are seen among the corvid birds, which include crows, jays, ravens, and magpies.



Horses

Like people, most horses bitten by mosquitoes will not become sick with West Nile virus. However, of those that do, clinical signs may include stumbling, circling, hind leg weakness, inability to stand, muscle tremors, and death. A vaccine to prevent West Nile virus infection in horses is available. Horse owners should consult with a veterinarian about West Nile virus vaccine and other vaccines against mosquito-borne diseases, such as western equine encephalitis. For more information on West Nile virus and horses, please visit the California Department of Food and Agriculture website at www.cdfa.ca.gov.



Dogs and Cats

Dogs and cats can be exposed to West Nile virus in the same way as humans. However, these animals are very resistant to West Nile virus and very rarely become ill. Concerned pet owners should consult with a veterinarian.