



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ANNOUNCES FIRST DEATH IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

SACRAMENTO – West Nile virus (WNV) has claimed the life of a Tehama County man, making him the first to die in Northern California and the 15th death in the state from the virus this year, State Public Health Officer Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson announced today. The number of Californians who have tested positive for WNV is 523.

“The death of this man is a sad reminder that West Nile virus has spread throughout the state,” Jackson said. “I strongly encourage Californians to continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites because we expect warm weather well into October. This is a great time of year for outdoor activities like hunting, hiking and football games, but people need to apply insect repellent and take other precautions.”

To date, WNV infections have been reported in the following counties: Los Angeles, 207; San Bernardino, 165; Riverside, 83; Orange, 27; Kern, 17; Fresno, nine; Tehama, four; Butte, three, and one each in Imperial, Lassen, Merced, San Diego, Shasta, Tulare, Ventura and Yolo. Of the 15 deaths, seven occurred in Los Angeles County, four in San Bernardino County, two in Riverside County and one each in Orange and Tehama counties.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Up to 20 percent of infected individuals experience only mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. Less than 1 percent of individuals will develop serious neurologic illness, such as encephalitis and meningitis. The elderly and those with lowered immune systems are more susceptible to serious illness.

WNV is generally transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Individuals can reduce their risk of WNV by taking these precautions:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET according to label instructions.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water, which can support mosquito breeding.

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- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and the first two hours after sunset.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.

WNV has also infected 253 horses, of which 115 have died. Since horses are susceptible to WNV and a vaccine for horses is available, horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations.

Jackson asked all Californians to assist in the extensive monitoring effort for WNV by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies and jays that have been dead for less than 48 hours. Reporting can be done by calling the WNV information hotline (1-877 WNV BIRD) or logging on to the WNV Web site at <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>.