



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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FRESNO COUNTY MAN IS STATE'S THIRD DEATH DUE TO WEST NILE VIRUS

Sacramento – West Nile Virus (WNV) has caused a third death in California this year. An elderly Fresno County man died from complications associated with the virus, Interim State Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Backer announced today.

“Our past experience suggests that the risk of human cases of West Nile virus increases dramatically during August and September. For most people, the risk of serious illness from West Nile virus is low, but this man’s death reminds us that Californians must be especially diligent about personal mosquito protection,” Backer said.

To date in 2005, WNV activity has been detected in 47 of California’s 58 counties. A total of 102 individuals from sixteen counties have become ill after exposure to WNV including the three deaths from Kings, Riverside and Fresno counties. Human WNV infections have been reported in the following counties: Butte, two; Fresno, seven; Kern, ten; Kings, eleven; Merced, one; Orange, two; Placer, one; Riverside, seventeen; Sacramento, twenty one; San Bernardino, four; San Joaquin, one; Solano, one; Stanislaus, eleven; Sutter, one; Tulare, eleven; and Ventura, one.

California recently provided \$9 million to 75 local agencies for mosquito control products, equipment and personnel to improve and expand mosquito control across the state. The funding is part of the \$12 million included in the state budget by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to enhance resources of existing programs and to expand efforts in areas of the state not currently covered by mosquito control services.

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

Seniors, especially those with chronic illness, can be particularly hard hit and are more likely to die from the disease. However, most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness, according to Backer. Taking necessary precautions to prevent contracting West Nile virus is key.

The most effective ways for individuals to prevent WNV are:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin 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.

For more information about WNV and to report dead birds, visit www.westnile.ca.gov or call toll-free: 1-877-WNV-BIRD.