

## **News Release**

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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## WEST NILE VIRUS CLAIMS TWO MORE LIVES IN CALIFORNIA Statewide Death Toll from WNV Reaches Eight

SACRAMENTO – An elderly man in Sacramento County and an elderly woman in Fresno County have died after being exposed to West Nile virus (WNV), increasing the number of fatalities statewide to eight, Interim State Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Backer announced today.

"The tragic deaths of these two individuals remind us of the seriousness of West Nile virus," Backer said. "We are in the peak of mosquito season in California. With the Labor Day holiday just around the corner, we urge the public to take action to prevent mosquito bites while they are enjoying outdoor activities.

"Our surveillance shows that large numbers of mosquitoes are infected in certain areas in California," he added. "Protection against mosquito bites and removing potential breeding sites on your property are the most effective measures that individuals can take. Our local health departments and mosquito-vector control agencies are working to control larger-scale breeding sites in and around our communities. Toward that end, the Governor's budget includes \$12 million to enhance resources of existing programs and to expand efforts in areas of the state not currently covered by mosquito control services."

As of Aug. 23, WNV activity had been detected in 51 of California's 58 counties. A total of 300 individuals from 24 counties have tested positive for WNV, including 269 who developed symptoms. Human WNV infections have been reported in the following counties: Sacramento, 70; Riverside and Stanislaus, 40 each; Kern, 28; Fresno, 23; Tulare, 22; Kings, 20; San Bernardino, eight; Los Angeles and Butte, seven each; Placer and San Joaquin, six each; Orange and Yolo, four each; Glenn and Sutter, three each; Merced, two; and Contra Costa, Madera, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma and Ventura, one each. County and statewide infection totals will be updated after 3 p.m. today on the West Nile virus Web site at <a href="https://www.westnile.ca.gov">www.westnile.ca.gov</a>)

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. While 80 percent of those infected with WNV will have no symptoms and not realize they have been infected, it is still important to take personal precautions to prevent contracting the virus. Elderly individuals and those with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk for serious illness.

The most effective ways for individuals to avoid mosquito bites and 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 <a href="www.westnile.ca.gov">www.westnile.ca.gov</a> or call toll-free: 1-877-WNV-BIRD.