



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
SERVICES

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STATE HEALTH OFFICER ANNOUNCES FIRST CONFIRMED HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN CALIFORNIA THIS YEAR

SACRAMENTO – A 27-year-old Kern County man has been infected with West Nile virus (WNV), the first reported human case in California this year, State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton announced today. The man is hospitalized with the neurological form of WNV infection.

“This first confirmed human West Nile virus infection in California reminds us that we are moving into the high-risk season with the arrival of hot weather,” Horton said. “The two most important steps people can take to prevent West Nile virus is to protect themselves from being bitten by a mosquito and to report dead birds to assist the state and local agencies with surveillance efforts.”

Tests conducted by the California Department of Health Services’ Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory in Richmond confirmed the WNV infection. To date, WNV has been detected in 13 of California’s 58 counties in 31 dead birds and 11 mosquito samples. In 2005, a total of 935 human WNV infections were reported in 40 counties, including 19 deaths.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite from a mosquito that has been infected by feeding on an infected bird. Although the risk of serious illness to most people is low, less than 1 percent of individuals will develop a more serious illness.

Horton urged Californians to take these simple steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites and WNV:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions, whenever you are outside.
- Eliminate all standing water in buckets, flowerpots, old tires, gutters and other sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.

- Be sure all window and door screens fit tightly and have no rips or tears.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants if you're going to be out at dawn or dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.

Approximately 80 percent of people who are infected with WNV will have no symptoms. Up to 20 percent of the people who become infected will display symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Less than one percent of infected individuals infected will develop severe illness that can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis.

For more information about WNV, visit www.westnile.ca.gov. The public is strongly encouraged to report dead birds on the Web site or by calling toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473).