



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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## **STATE HEALTH OFFICER ANNOUNCES CALIFORNIA'S FIRST DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS IN 2006**

SACRAMENTO – West Nile virus (WNV) has claimed the life of an elderly woman in Butte County, making her the first to die from complications associated with the virus this year in California, State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton announced today.

“For most people, the risk of serious illness from West Nile virus is low, but this woman’s death reminds us that we must take precautions to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites,” Horton said.

To date in 2006, WNV activity has been detected in 43 of California’s 58 counties, and 50 individuals from 13 counties have become ill after exposure to WNV, including the woman who died. WNV has been detected in 443 dead birds, 423 mosquito pools, 13 horses and 143 sentinel chickens.

California has one of the most comprehensive WNV surveillance and control systems in the United States. In recognition of the key role these systems play in controlling WNV, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger included \$3 million in one-time supplemental funds in his 2006-2007 budget that were recently distributed to 61 local agencies to enhance mosquito control and abatement efforts.

“California remains poised to respond immediately and appropriately when surveillance data indicate that the risk to humans posed by West Nile virus is increasing,” Horton said.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Recent data indicate that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness. The most effective ways for individuals to prevent WNV are:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin 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](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD.