



Nationwide, WNV has been linked to a total of 3,541 illnesses and 66 deaths this year. Since it was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999, WNV has been found in 46 states and the District of Columbia.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Others will have only mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. Less than 1 percent of individuals, primarily the elderly and those with lowered immune systems, will develop serious illness such as encephalitis and meningitis.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Human-to-human transmission of WNV generally does not occur. However, human WNV infection was associated with blood transfusions and organ transplants in 2002.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

The comprehensive surveillance program to monitor for WNV in California has been established by CDHS in collaboration with the University of California, Davis, California Department of Food and Agriculture, local mosquito and vector control districts and other state and local agencies. The program includes testing suspect cases in humans and horses, capturing and testing mosquitoes, testing sentinel chickens and evaluating dead birds. Approximately 200 flocks of sentinel chickens at sites throughout the state are tested every two weeks for the presence of the virus.

Since horses are susceptible to WNV and a vaccine is available for horses, horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations.

For more information about WNV or to report dead birds, visit the Department of Health Services Web site at: <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>.