

Social Media Plan for Local Agencies – Mosquitoes and West Nile Virus

Mosquitoes in California can spread West Nile virus (WNV) to people and animals from infected birds. WNV is endemic in California, meaning it is established and common throughout most of the state. Birds can get sick and die from WNV, which makes them good indicators of WNV activity in the environment, even before human cases are reported. The California Department of Public Health, Vector-Borne Disease Section (CDPH-VBDS) and local vector control agencies collect information about dead birds in California each year to monitor and control WNV activity in the state. WNV most often spreads to people during the summer and early fall when the mosquitoes that carry WNV (called *Culex* mosquitoes) are most active. WNV is the most common and serious vector-borne disease in California – WNV can make some people very sick and can even cause death.

Local agencies in California can use the outline below to guide their social media communication efforts about mosquitoes, WNV, and dead bird reporting throughout the year. Key dates and activities listed below are provided as suggestions for WNV awareness and outreach. For sample messaging and graphics that can be used with this outline, please see the [WestNile.ca.gov Sample Social Media webpage](https://westnile.ca.gov). For questions about this outline, please email VBDS@cdph.ca.gov.

Key Dates and Social Media Activities

Spring

- Second Monday in April** – the California WNV & Dead Bird Call Center opens for dead bird reporting (the Call Center is typically open Monday–Friday from April through mid-October each year)

Social Media Activities

- Announce the opening of the WNV & Dead Bird Call Center
- Share information about how the public can report dead birds and why it's important
 - Phone reports: 1 (877) 968-2473
 - Online reports: <https://westnile.ca.gov>
 - Hashtags: #WestNileVirus, #ReportDeadBirds

- Third full week in April** – California Mosquito Awareness Week (coordinated by the [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](https://www.mosquitovectorcontrol.org/))

Social Media Activities

- Raise awareness about mosquitoes in California and the diseases they can transmit
- Share information about mosquito control practices in preparation for mosquito season during warmer months
 - As the weather warms, mosquitoes become active, and standing water from spring rains can contribute to mosquito breeding
 - Remind people that [mosquitoes breed and lay eggs in standing water](#)
 - Encourage residents to take charge of their yards and reduce mosquito breeding areas before mosquitoes become an even bigger issue in summer:
 - Emphasize "tip and toss" or "dump and drain" activities around the home, especially after it rains
 - Hashtags: #MosquitoWeek, #FightTheBite, #DumpAndDrain, #TipAndToss

Summer

- **Last week of June** – National Mosquito Control Week (coordinated by the [American Mosquito Control Association](#))

Social Media Activities

- Share information about your local vector control agency's safe and effective mosquito control practices to protect public health
 - Provide contact information so the public can report mosquito problems or request more information about mosquito control services in their area
- Encourage easy steps that people can take to control mosquitoes around their homes, including draining standing water
- Hashtags: #NationalMosquitoWeek, #FightTheBite, #DumpAndDrain, #TipAndToss

- **June through September** – the hottest time of the year is peak mosquito season in California (see [CDPH Mosquito Season Risk Graphic](#))

Social Media Activities

- Continue to share messaging about dead bird reporting as a way to monitor WNV activity
- Share messaging about mosquito season, West Nile virus, and mosquito-bite prevention

- Focus messaging on awareness of [WNV symptoms/disease](#), [mosquito bite prevention](#), and proper insect repellent use, especially at dawn and dusk (see [CDPH Insect Repellent toolkit](#))
 - People over the age of 60 and those with certain medical conditions (like cancer or diabetes) are more likely to get very sick from WNV
- Hashtags: #FightTheBite, #Mosquitoes, #Repellent, #WestNileVirus, #ReportDeadBirds

Key Summer Dates

- Last Monday of May – **Memorial Day**
 - People often gather for celebrations, parades, or a shared meal outdoors – mosquitoes that spread WNV are active outside in the early evening
- July 4 – **Independence Day**
 - People who celebrate are often outside at dusk to watch fireworks or share a meal – mosquito-bite prevention at this time is key
- August 20 – **World Mosquito Day**
 - Global, national, state, and local agencies often share information about the burden of mosquito-borne diseases and advances in mosquito control technology
 - Hashtag: #WorldMosquitoDay
- First Monday of September – **Labor Day**
 - Sometimes considered the last holiday of the summer, people often gather outdoors over the holiday weekend – mosquito-bite prevention at this time is key
- Consider **other summertime holidays and local outdoor events** where people may be gathering in the evening when *Culex* mosquitoes are active: concerts in the park, sports events, farmers markets, etc.

Early Fall

- **October** – mosquitoes are still active in California, even as the weather starts to cool

Social Media Activities

- Share final reminder messaging about dead bird reporting as a way to monitor WNV activity
 - The WNV & Dead Bird Call Center typically closes in mid-October, but [online reporting](#) is available year-round. WNV testing for dead

birds is limited from November to March, but dead birds are still collected and tested in some areas of California during this time.

- Remind people that mosquitoes are still active in the early fall, especially when temperatures are warm after a late summer/early fall rain
- As the weather starts to cool and the rainy season begins, instruct people to remove or cover outdoor containers around their homes that could collect water and contribute to mosquito breeding

Taglines

- Don't give mosquitoes a biting chance
- Don't forget to dump and drain after spring rain
- Do your part to help Fight the Bite

General Links/Resources

- [CDPH-VBDS West Nile Virus website](https://westnile.ca.gov/)
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- [CDPH Insect Repellent Toolkit – *Don't Give Bugs a Biting Chance!*](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Dont-Give-Bugs-a-Biting-chance.aspx)
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Dont-Give-Bugs-a-Biting-chance.aspx>
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) West Nile Virus website](https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/)
<https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/>
- Your local vector control agency's website
 - Look up local vector control agency information:
 - [CDPH-VBDS West Nile Virus website](https://westnile.ca.gov/)
 - [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California Member Agencies](#)