

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. Birds can get sick and die from WNV, which makes them good indicators of WNV activity, 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 communications 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](http://WestNile.ca.gov/SampleSocialMedia). For questions about this outline, please email VBDS@cdph.ca.gov.

Key Dates and Social Media Activities (for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)



Spring

- **Second Monday in April** – the California WNV & Dead Bird Call Center opens for dead bird reporting (the WNV & Dead Bird 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 – 1 (877) 968-2473
 - Tag CDPH-VBDS: @westnile.ca.gov
 - Hashtags: #WestNileVirus, #ReportDeadBirds
- Share information about how the public can report dead birds and why it's important
 - Link to <https://westnile.ca.gov> so followers can report dead birds online and learn more about WNV
- **Third full week in April** – California Mosquito Awareness Week (coordinated by the [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](http://MosquitoandVectorControlAssociationofCalifornia))

Social Media Activities

- Share information about mosquito control practices in preparation for mosquito season during warmer months



Summer

- As the weather warms up, mosquitoes become active, and standing water from spring rains can encourage mosquito breeding
- Remind people that [mosquitoes breed and lay eggs in standing water](#)
- Encourage "tip and toss" or "dump and drain" activities around the home
- Hashtags: #MosquitoWeek, #FightTheBite, #DumpAndDrain, #TipAndToss

- **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 agencies' safe and effective mosquito control practices
 - 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** – peak mosquito season in California (see [CDPH Mosquito Season Risk Graphic](#))

Social Media Activities

- Continue to share messaging about dead bird reporting to detect WNV activity
- Share messaging about mosquito season, West Nile virus, and mosquito-bite prevention
 - Focus messaging on [WNV symptoms/disease](#), [mosquito bite prevention](#), and proper insect repellent use, especially at dawn and dusk (see [CDPH Insect Repellent toolkit](#))
 - 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



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 cover or remove outdoor containers around their homes that could collect water and encourage 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/)
<https://westnile.ca.gov/>
- [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>
 - Short URL: bit.ly/CDPHRepellent
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) West Nile Virus webpage](https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html)
<https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>
- Your local vector control agency's website
 - Look up local vector control agency information at: <https://westnile.ca.gov/>