



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **DEAD BIRD TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS - SIGNALS START OF SEASON**

*-District reports first positive case of West Nile virus in 2008-*

**CONCORD, CALIFORNIA** - - A dead Hermit Thrush found in Alamo has tested positive for West Nile virus, the first positive West Nile virus case documented in Contra Costa County this year.

“West Nile virus is firmly established in California,” said Deborah Bass, spokeswoman for the District. “But this first bird is a strong reminder that mosquitoes can transmit the disease to animals and people, and that it should be taken seriously.”

Since the arrival of West Nile virus in Contra Costa County in 2004, 22 people have been documented with the disease and two have died. This year, one hundred dead birds from 18 California counties have been documented so far as well as 12 samples of mosquitoes and two chickens. Hot weather typically precedes positive virus cases since mosquitoes reproduce in as little as five days, as well as amplify the virus quicker in hotter weather, thus increasing the risk of West Nile virus infection.

Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with WNV will not get sick; however, up to 20 percent of the population infected with WNV will get West Nile fever. West Nile fever causes people to experience mild to severe flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body ache and possible paralysis. Less than one percent of infected individuals will require hospitalization. The elderly and those with compromised immune systems are most susceptible to illness and death caused by WNV.

Residents are urged to take the following precautions:

**DEFEND** yourself against mosquitoes by using a repellent with an effective active ingredient such as DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Make sure to follow label directions.

**DRAIN** all sources of standing water that may support mosquito-breeding habitats. Residential sources can be a big producer of mosquitoes in Contra Costa County.

**DOOR** and window screens should fit tight and be in good repair. This will prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

**DO** vaccinate your horses. Horses are highly susceptible to West Nile virus – approximately half of the horses that get WNV die or have to be euthanized.

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DAWN and DUSK are times to avoid being outdoor since this is when mosquitoes are most active.

DRESS appropriately by wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors and mosquitoes are present.

DEAD birds should be reported to 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473). Not all birds will be picked up and tested, but reporting dead birds provides important information for mosquito control efforts.

To learn if the District is spraying for adult mosquitoes in Contra Costa County, please visit the district's website at [www.ccmvcd.dst.ca.us](http://www.ccmvcd.dst.ca.us) or call the District at (925) 685-9301 for a recorded message. **Adult mosquito spray notifications by email are also available** by signing up on the website.

Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District is located at 155 Mason Circle in Concord. Call the District to report mosquito problems at (925) 685-9301, or visit their office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to get FREE mosquitofish for ornamental ponds or horse troughs.

For information concerning human West Nile virus symptoms, prevention, or testing, please call the Contra Costa Health Services department at (888) 959-9911 or visit their website at [www.ccpbublichealth.org](http://www.ccpbublichealth.org)

For information concerning West Nile virus and horses, please visit the California Department of Food and Agriculture Animal Health Branch at [www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/wnv\\_info.htm](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/wnv_info.htm) or call them at (916) 654-1447.

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