



News Release

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REDUCTION IN DEAD BIRD REPORTS MAY INCREASE WEST NILE VIRUS RISK

– 40 percent reduction in reports hinder West Nile virus control efforts; eight more dead birds test positive for the virus–

CONCORD, CALIFORNIA - - Forty percent fewer dead bird reports mean 40 percent fewer clues as to where human cases of the virus may appear. Last year at this time 1,141 dead birds were reported compared to this year, 691 dead birds have been reported. The Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District is urging residents to report dead birds to the state hotline at 877-WNV-BIRD.

“The dead bird reports are crucial to our surveillance and control efforts,” said Deborah Bass, spokeswoman for the District. “In essence, these reports help us to identify where people are most likely to get infected and therefore, where we should apply our efforts for maximum control of mosquitoes.”

Reports are made to the dead bird hotline that is part of the California Department of Public Health’s vector-borne disease section that feeds the data into a computer system known as DYCAST. The system creates a report based on dead bird clusters that have been helpful in determining where human cases may occur.

Today, the District is reporting eight more dead birds that have tested positive for West Nile virus. The dead birds were reported from the cities of Antioch, Brentwood, Richmond, Orinda, Danville, and Bay Point. The type of birds reported were a crow, an European Starling, a house finch, a flycatcher, an American Robin, a Lesser Goldfinch, a Western Scrub Jay, and a hawk.

So far this year, these birds bring the total positive West Nile virus dead bird count to 12 and there have been 13 samples of mosquitoes that tested positive as well in Contra Costa County.

Residents are urged to wear mosquito repellents with the ingredients DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus.

The public is reminded to also report neglected swimming pools or other water sources where mosquitoes emerge. Reports may be made anonymously.

To understand possible mosquito water sources in yards, visit the District’s Web site

http://intranet.ccmvcd.net:8089/pdf/mosquito_proof_yard.pdf

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Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with West Nile virus will not get sick; however, up to 20 percent of the population infected with West Nile virus 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 West Nile virus.

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 West Nile virus die or have to be euthanized.
- DAWN and DUSK are times to avoid being outdoors 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) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov. Not all birds will be picked up and tested, but reporting dead birds provides important information for mosquito control efforts.

People wishing to be notified about adult mosquito fogging or spraying in residential areas have several options. They may visit the District's Web site at www.ccmvcd.dst.ca.us and opt to receive the notifications automatically by e-mail; they can view information on the District's Web site; or they may phone the District for a recorded message at (925) 771-6195.

Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District, a public health agency, is located at 155 Mason Circle in Concord. Call the District to report mosquito problems at (925) 771-6195 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 Web site at www.ccpublichealth.org.

For information concerning West Nile virus and horses, please visit the California Department of Food and Agriculture Animal Health Branch at www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahgss/ah/wnv_info.htm or call them at (916) 654-1447.