



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **HOME FORECLOSURES WORSEN RISK FOR WEST NILE VIRUS**

*-Nearly half of the nearly 10,000 homes in foreclosure in Contra Costa County are located in areas of the highest risk for West Nile virus--*

**CONCORD, CALIFORNIA** - - Home foreclosures are proving to be a health risk in Contra Costa County. The Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District is asking homeowners, neighbors, Realtors, landscapers and other home service personnel to be vigilant in their fight against mosquito breeding and West Nile virus.

Homes in foreclosure have an increased risk of breeding mosquitoes that can carry the virus because homeowners are busy dealing with their financial situation and not necessarily maintaining their swimming pool or eliminating standing water that can breed mosquitoes on their property. Often, homes are ultimately abandoned and the swimming pool or spa is left to the mosquitoes where hundreds of thousands of them can be produced.

“Nearly 10,000 homes in Contra Costa County are in some sort of the foreclosure process and have the potential to produce mosquitoes simply through neglect or abandonment,” said Deborah Bass, spokeswoman for the District. “To make matters worse, many of those homes are located in areas that are at higher risk for people contracting West Nile virus.”

Overall, district technicians have inspected twice as many pools this year than last year. One out of three swimming pools was breeding mosquitoes.

“Clearly the West Nile virus risk would be decreased drastically if every resident and business owner became a steward of their neighborhood and their community,” Bass said. “With more than 420,000 households and businesses in the county, the District simply doesn’t have the workforce to go door to door and inspect every property.”

Homeowners are urged to drain their pools properly and not into the street. For proper pool-draining instructions, visit [http://www.cccleanwater.org/\\_pdfs/Pool\\_Spa\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.cccleanwater.org/_pdfs/Pool_Spa_Brochure.pdf). Bleach or other additives should not be used. Mosquitofish are available at the District free of charge.

Recent events, such as the 41 positive mosquito samples found in San Joaquin County that borders Contra Costa County, the clusters of dead bird reports in the county, and the increase of mosquitoes breeding in swimming pools and backyard sources have District officials worried that the risk of West Nile virus may be greater this year.

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Last year in Contra Costa County, eight people were documented with West Nile virus and two people died. To date in 2007 there have been seven birds that have tested positive for West Nile virus.

In California this year, one person has died of the virus and nine more infected.

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 big producers of mosquitoes in Contra Costa County.

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 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.ccpublichealth.org](http://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.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.

To report dead birds or squirrels or learn about West Nile virus cases and activity in California, visit the California Department of Public Health's website at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)