



NEWS RELEASE

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FIRST HORSE AND THREE MORE BIRDS TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

CONCORD, CALIFORNIA - - The Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District received confirmation today that three more birds and a horse have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). The horse, located in East County, was treated and later euthanized. Confirmatory testing was conducted by the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory, at University of California, Davis and reported on August 9. Two birds from Lafayette and one bird from Oakley also tested positive for the virus. The first bird, a scrub jay, was found near Reliez Valley Road and Withers Avenue. The second bird, a house finch, was found near St. Mary's Road and Rohrer Drive. The third bird, an American kestrel, was found in Oakley near West Cypress Road and Ohara Avenue.

"We strongly urge every horse owner to vaccinate their horses," said Deborah Bass, public affairs manager for the District. "Nearly fifty percent of the horses that are diagnosed with West Nile virus in California die or are euthanized – it's tragic given that there is a vaccine available".

Clinical signs of WNV infection in horses include stumbling, staggering, wobbly gait, loss of coordination, weakness and paralysis. Humans and animals cannot get West Nile virus from an infected horse; it is only spread by the bite of an infected mosquito.

To date in Contra Costa County, there have been a total of 17 birds, three mosquito samples, and one horse that have tested positive for West Nile virus. There have been no human cases. In California, there have been three West Nile virus-related fatalities and 118 people diagnosed with the disease this year.

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:

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

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IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

- 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 are the biggest 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.
- 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.

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 our office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to get mosquitofish. Visit our website www.ccmvcd.dst.ca.us for more information or to learn about possible mosquito spraying in your area.

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

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 or call them at (916) 654-1447.

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