

News Release**July 22, 2004****For More Information, Call:****--For Immediate Release--**

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West Nile Virus Education Underway by County Health Officials**Is Nevada County at risk for West Nile Virus?**

Well, yes it is. West Nile Virus is a virus that is spread to humans by mosquitoes. 133 different species of birds carry the virus and the female mosquito picks it up from birds and transfers it to humans. It has been moving westward from New York since 1999 and reached southern California last summer.

As of July 21, 2004 there have been 35 human cases in southern California. For the first time, WNV has been confirmed this week in several dead birds and mosquito populations in northern California as close as Butte County, and a bird in Carson City, NV. The State of California and a multitude of southern California mosquito abatement districts have been testing humans, mosquitoes, birds, sentinel chickens (a flock of chickens that is tested over time to determine the incidence of virus in their blood) and horses to determine how widespread the virus is. For the latest data, see the state website, www.westnile.ca.gov.

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In order to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, stay inside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most prevalent, wear long pants and long sleeved shirts when outside and they are present, and use repellents containing DEET.

It is also important to make sure house screens fit the windows securely and that any holes are patched. There should be no need to use repellents inside your house.

Horses are susceptible to WNV and should be vaccinated against the disease. Contact your local veterinarian for more specific details. Jason Shaver, D.V.M., is a member of the Nevada County West Nile Virus Task Force and is available for questions at 273-7511.

As stated earlier, many birds can serve as a reservoir for the virus. Most birds do not become ill, but crows, jays, ravens, and magpies may die when they get the virus. Dead birds of these species, which have not been killed by a cat, dog, car, etc., and have been dead less than 48 hours, should be reported for testing. For this reason, the State of California has established a Dead Bird Surveillance phone number. The WNV Dead Bird Surveillance number is 1/877-WNV-BIRD. They will give instructions on what to do with the dead bird. They can also be accessed through the Internet at www.westnile.ca.gov/.

Finally, if you do experience flu-like symptoms, it is recommended that you contact your physician.

Please also go to the Nevada County West Nile Virus website for additional information. The website is www.mynevadacounty.com/westnilevirus/.

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There is no need to panic! Most people that are infected with WNV feel nothing or mild flu like symptoms. A very small percentage can exhibit more severe symptoms of headache and high fever. For this reason, we want to do all that we can to avoid getting bit by mosquitoes.

What can we do about it?

All homeowners need to remove all mosquito-breeding sites in their yards to help keep the population of mosquitoes to a minimum this year. You really can make a difference. Just take a tour of your yard and eliminate all the standing water. All those pockets of water in those blue tarps, wagons, toys, flowerpots, rain gutters, etc. are potential mosquito breeding sites. **Get rid of all unnecessary standing water.**

For dog bowls, birdbaths, etc., where you want water, change it at least every few days. Under ideal conditions, mosquitoes can complete a cycle from egg to adult in 72 hours!

For ponds, proper pond management is important. If you already have fish in your pond you may be OK. Mosquito fish eat a phenomenal number of mosquito larvae and can be obtained free from Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD). Please call ahead to 272-3417. Both the NCRCD and the Agricultural Commissioner can provide information on pond management.

Small ornamental ponds can be treated with a bacterial pesticide, which contains bacteria that kills mosquito larvae, but is harmless to humans and other mammals. There are many products on the market for this type of application. The active ingredient is *Bacillus thuringensis var. israeliensis*. For questions regarding the use of pesticides contact the Agricultural Commissioner at 273-2648 and ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.