

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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HEADLINE: West Nile Virus Identified in the San Gabriel Valley

WEST COVINA, CA (July 14, 2005) - Mosquitoes collected and tested July 12, 2005 from the City of Claremont were infected with West Nile virus (WNV). This is the first indication of WNV activity in the San Gabriel Valley this year.

The District uses a rapid and highly sensitive RAMP Test (Rapid Analyte Measurement Platform) to test for the presence of WNV in mosquitoes and crows. This testing regime provides real-time information critical to the District's ability to rapidly target sites where WNV is circulating.

"We are not terribly surprised" noted Assistant Manager Kenn Fujioka, PhD., "Last year in the San Gabriel Valley we experienced a WNV epidemic and we expected to see evidence of the virus here again this year."

The mosquitoes were collected near a water district spreading ground in the northeast portion of the City that has been flooded by this year's record rainfall. The water table is very high preventing water absorption and bringing natural springs to the surface. Thick vegetation and algae mats in the water have provided ideal conditions for mosquitoes.

"The site is a perfect example of how valuable our ongoing surveillance efforts are in the fight against mosquito-transmitted disease" cites the District's Manager, Steve West. "Our activities have since greatly reduced mosquito numbers in the area preventing what could have been a real problem."

The District regularly samples mosquitoes throughout the San Gabriel Valley. When trap counts increased in late June in the nearby Claremont Colleges Biological Field Station, it led our technician to intensify his search of the nearby spreading grounds northeast of the

Field Station. Prior to yesterday, all mosquitoes sampled from Claremont have tested negative for WNV. Tests run Wednesday on additional mosquitoes were negative.

Residents from Claremont and surrounding communities should be especially diligent about avoiding mosquito bites and should check around their property and under the sub-floors of their homes for unusual water accumulation. They are encouraged to contact the District if they identified standing water that can not be easily removed, are having problems with adult mosquitoes, or find dead birds.

Birds, especially crows, are highly susceptible to WNV. Residents are encouraged to help us track and control WNV by reporting recently dead birds to the District at (626) 814-9466.

These findings are a clear warning that the virus is continuing to circulate in the environment. NOW is the time to take precautions! Two of California's four people infected with WNV this year have been from southern California, the most recent a 39 year old Yucaipa woman. These infections can be prevented if the following precautions are taken:

- Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active – from dusk until dawn.
- If outdoors, wear protective clothing and apply mosquito repellants according to label directions – those containing DEET have been proven to be the most effective.
- Ensure door and window screens are secured and in good repair to prevent mosquito entrance into homes.
- Eliminate standing and stagnant water. Eggs are laid and immature mosquitoes develop in dirty pools & spas, ponds, bird baths, buckets, barrels, children's toys etc. Immature mosquitoes become biting adults in 5-7 days.
- Acquire free mosquito-eating fish for permanent water sources on property (ponds, troughs, large fountains) from local mosquito & vector control districts.
- Contact the District to report mosquito problems or green pools/spas.

The District provides mosquito and other vector control services as a public service to residents in the San Gabriel Valley. Funding is secured through an annual benefit assessment; therefore, residents are not charged any additional fee for our assistance.

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