

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEADLINE: Mosquito Concerns on the Rise

Are we poised for a repeat of the 2004 West Nile Virus (WNV) season? Hopefully not, but the **weather patterns are strikingly similar** so far. Last year, we saw early WNV transmission (first detected in a dead crow collected on February 24) after a series of rain storms followed by above average temperatures in January. The higher temperatures we've experienced throughout this last week have vector control officials concerned.

The recent **rains and flooding have created a staggering number of standing water sources** that are prime sites for mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes and the viruses they harbor both reproduce prodigiously at higher temperatures.

"We expect mosquitoes will readily take advantage of the changes in weather," notes Steve West, Manager of the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District.

Although West Nile activity had slowed, recent evidence shows **the virus is still being transmitted**. Three birds and a sentinel chicken were confirmed infected with WNV in December of 2004 from Orange and southern Los Angeles Counties respectively. Two additional birds, one from Santa Clara County and a second from Sonoma County tested positive this month.

This is a strong reminder that **we must remain diligent**. "We have mosquitoes throughout the year in California. Residents should not assume that West Nile virus risks are 'gone' for the winter" said West, "especially after the recent rains."

"This evidence, coupled with what we are seeing both north and south of Los Angeles County, indicates a potential for **year-round WNV risks** in southern California" cautioned Kenn Fujioka, Assistant Manager of the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District. "Our technicians and ecologists have continued working hard through the winter to keep mosquito populations as low as possible."

Mosquitoes can lay eggs and mature to biting adults in 7-10 days at these temperatures. **Residents MUST take advantage of the break in the weather and eliminate accumulated rainfall from their properties:**

- Check and drain all trash cans. Drill holes in the bottoms to allow water drainage. Keep trash cans tightly covered at all times.
- Drain water from flowerpot trays and self-watering flowerpots. Use material or steel wool to block 'fill-holes' in self-watering pots which mosquitoes use to enter and lay eggs.
- Clean rain gutters of leaves and pooled water. Sweep standing water from street gutters and report ongoing problems to the District.
- Check patio/yard drains to ensure they are free of standing water. Clean debris to ensure water flows out.
- Check and turn over all children's toys, buckets, wheel barrows, etc. Store indoors or in containers that will not hold water. Drill drain holes in tire swings to prevent water accumulation.
- Inoperable pools and spas must be checked and maintained now, and after every rainfall event – no matter how minor. Just a few inches of water will take weeks to evaporate and can produce thousands of mosquitoes.
- Ponds, fountains, water barrels, and birdbaths are notorious breeders of mosquitoes. Ensure water movement by filtration and aeration, and stock with mosquitofish (available for free at your local district) if appropriate. Bird baths should be flushed weekly and kept free of algae.

Dead birds are still an early indication that the virus is circulating in the environment. **Please report ALL dead birds** to the District by calling (626) 814-9466 or online at www.sgvmosquito.org/report.html. Not all birds will be collected for testing, however the information is still critical to the statewide dead bird monitoring program as it enables vector control officials to target potentially problematic areas.

Residents are encouraged to call the district to report mosquito problems, request mosquito-eating fish, or to request an inspection. These services are at no charge to the resident as they are pre-funded through an annual benefit assessment.

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