

Press Release

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HEADLINE: More West Nile Virus Found in Southern California

WEST COVINA – The West Nile virus (WNV) season is “ON” – and earlier than experts had expected. Three more crows collected in the San Gabriel Valley – from the cities of El Monte, Temple City, and West Covina, and one from Ojai in Ventura County have tested positive for West Nile virus. So far this year, birds infected with West Nile virus have been found in Orange County, Riverside County, Los Angeles County, and now in Ventura County indicating that the virus, as expected, has successfully established itself throughout Southern California. Ninety-five birds tested positive in southern California in 2003.

These findings are a clear warning that the virus is continuing to circulate and amplify in the environment. NOW is the time to take precautions!

West Nile virus is passed primarily between birds by mosquitoes. Humans, horses and other animals can become infected with WNV if bitten by an infected mosquito. Steve West, Manager of the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District notes that “One in five people bitten by an infected mosquito will become ill – most often with high fever, severe headache, and muscle aches – with symptoms sometimes lingering for many weeks. Unfortunately, the elderly and individuals with suppressed immune symptoms are at greatest risk for more serious and potentially life threatening illness.” West said, “We are deeply concerned.”

Birds, especially crows, are highly susceptible to West Nile virus. Reports of dead birds are an early indication that the virus is circulating in the environment and being transmitted by mosquitoes. Local mosquito control districts and health departments are working in coordination with the California Department of Health Services, UC Davis arbovirus diagnostic laboratory, and the California Animal Health and Food Safety

Laboratory in a statewide interagency surveillance program for WNV. Residents are encouraged to help us track and control West Nile virus by reporting recently dead birds to the State hotline at **877-WNV-BIRD (877/968-2473)**. Although not all birds can be picked up for testing, all calls are important. Mosquito control activities are carried out throughout the state by a network of mosquito control agencies. The hotline can help residents locate the district nearest them.

Mosquito precautions taken now can *significantly* reduce mosquito populations and disease transmission. Residents are urged to:

- 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 their property (ponds, troughs, large fountains) from local mosquito & vector control districts.
- Contact the district to report mosquito problems or green pools/spas.

Additional information or requests for service can be obtained at www.sqvmosquito.org or by calling (626) 814-9466. 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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