



**Greater Los Angeles County
Vector Control District**
12545 Florence Ave.
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
(562) 944-9656

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Stephanie Miladin
Public Information Officer
(562) 944-6789
E-mail: smiladin@glacvcd.org

First Detection of West Nile Virus in Los Angeles County Mosquitoes This Year

The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District received confirmation from the California Department of Health Services, UC Davis arbovirus diagnostic laboratory, mosquitoes submitted on May 6, 2004 tested positive for West Nile virus along the San Gabriel River Corridor in the City of Pico Rivera. This is the first indication of mosquitoes infected with West Nile virus in Los Angeles County for 2004.

Along with West Nile virus positive mosquitoes, eight crows collected between May 6-12, 2004, in the cities of Hacienda Heights, Whittier, and Cerritos tested positive for West Nile virus. These are the first birds that have tested positive for West Nile virus within the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District's boundaries for 2004.

“Although no human cases have yet been reported, but because the early detection of the virus this year, the chance of an epidemic of West Nile virus occurring in Los Angeles and neighboring counties is potentially high,” says District Manager Dr. Jack Hazelrigg. Since March, the virus has been detected in birds in Los Angeles, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties.

This virus is spread by mosquitoes, which feed on the blood of infected birds and pass it on to humans or other animals. West Nile virus is not spread by person-to-person contact or directly from birds to humans. While there is no evidence that people can get the virus from handling live or dead birds, individuals should not attempt to catch or handle them.

According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, only about two persons of every 10 who are bitten by an infected mosquito will experience any illness. Although illness from West Nile virus is usually accompanied by flu-like symptoms, serious illness and death are possible, particularly for persons over the age of 50.

“Wipe Out West Nile Virus” is a public awareness campaign launched by mosquito and vector control districts in metropolitan Los Angeles and surrounding communities to assist in preventing West Nile virus. Residents can protect themselves and their family by playing an active role in mosquito prevention. It's easy to do:

-More-

News Fax / P. 2

- Eliminate standing water on your property by dumping or draining water in neglected swimming pools, ponds, rain barrels, discarded tires, buckets, or anything holding water for more than a few days. This will stop the mosquito life cycle.
- Memorial Day weekend kicks-off outdoor activities, and the District is urging residents to take precautions if planning to be active outdoors, especially at dusk or dusk, when mosquitoes are most active, by wearing long pants and long sleeve shirts.
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET.
- Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.

Since mosquitoes contract West Nile virus from infected birds, be sure to report sick or dead crows, ravens, jays, or magpies by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD. To find out more, visit www.wipeoutwestnile.com

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