



**Greater Los Angeles County
Vector Control District**
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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Backyard Mosquito Breeding Sources Are A Potential West Nile Virus Problem

Above normal rainfall has settled into unsuspecting backyard mosquito breeding sources, thus increasing the likelihood of mosquito emergence and risk of the potentially serious West Nile Virus (WNV). The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District is conducting year-round mosquito surveillance and control efforts to combat WNV. Mosquito service requests submitted to the District from homeowners has increased after the heavy rains. Many are concerned about standing water in public sources, when actually the breeding sources are right on people's private property. "Residents are breeding mosquitoes in their backyards and don't even know it," says Stephanie Heintz, Public Information Officer. District staff is coming across an alarming amount of breeding sources on private property, raising concerns for the upcoming mosquito and WNV season. "Many private property owners have sources with standing water, and a majority of these sources are breeding mosquitoes, states District Manager Jack Hazelrigg. Our concern is that we are finding mosquito breeding unusually early this season."

The District is asking for the public's assistance by having property owners inspect their own front and backyards for likely mosquito breeding sites and dump or drain the water. It only takes a half-inch of standing water to breed mosquitoes-the amount found in a sewing thimble. Mosquitoes depend on standing, stagnant water to complete their life cycle, which takes 7-10 days to go from egg to adult. According to Minoo Madon, Scientific Technical Services Director, "The significant amount of rainfall in southern CA may complicate matters if we have an onset of warm weather this spring. Once the temperatures are above the mid 70's for a few weeks, it will spur mosquito proliferation."

West Nile virus spreads when mosquitoes bite infected birds and consequently transmit the virus to humans and animals. The virus is not contagious or spread by person-to-person contact. Two WNV positive crows were discovered in the San Fernando Valley in early February. Last year, WNV activity was determined in early March in southern CA. Birds, particularly crows, ravens, magpies, and jays are highly susceptible to WNV and an indicator that the virus is active. The public's participation in dead bird reporting is highly encouraged because it helps the District concentrate its mosquito control efforts in areas where there is WNV bird activity. The CA

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Department of Health Services has set up a free hotline for the public to report dead birds: 877-WNV BIRD or on-line at: www.westnile.ca.gov.

Residents can protect themselves and their family by playing an active role in mosquito prevention by doing the following:

- Eliminate standing water on your property by dumping or draining water in neglected swimming pools, spas, ponds, clogged rain gutters, rain barrels, discarded tires, buckets, holes in trees, watering troughs, leaking garden equipment, water gardens, or anything holding water for more than a week. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in birdbaths weekly. Keep children wading pools empty and on their sides when they are not being used. This will stop the mosquito life cycle.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants outdoors, especially at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET.
- Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.

For further assistance, call your local vector control district or visit: www.glacvcd.org