



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

INFORMATION RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2008

Contact: Truc Dever
Public Information Officer
Office: (562) 944-9656
Mobile: (562)244-2648
E-mail: tdever@glacvcd.org

Home Foreclosures and Abandoned Swimming Pools A Major Public Health Concern in 2008

SANTA FE SPRINGS--- Mosquito season is back and the California State Legislature has kick-started the fight against these blood-sucking pests by declaring April 21st through 25th West Nile virus and Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week.

This year brings new public health concerns for Los Angeles County residents as West Nile virus positions itself to resurge due to ideal ecological conditions. But, there is also another force impacting resurgence. The explosion of home foreclosures has not only pushed the State's economy to the brink, it has vector control agencies working over-time to control the proliferating populations of potential disease-carrying mosquitoes breeding in abandoned swimming pools.

Through March of 2008, the number of homes headed towards foreclosure has risen 143 percent from the same quarter last year, according to La Jolla-based DataQuick Information Systems. More than 20,000 default notices have been sent to Los Angeles County homeowners so far. The statistics are a shocking wake-up call to the housing sector, but offers residents little information about the looming public health crisis.

Empty houses can hide un-maintained swimming pools, spas, fountains, and bird baths, which can provide the stagnant water needed for mosquitoes to complete their life cycle.

Within the 1,330 square miles serviced by the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District, there are thousands of out-of-service swimming pools that require routine mosquito treatment. The number is climbing every day, as abandoned swimming pools from vacant homes are reported. The number of service requests on abandoned swimming pools has increased 40 percent over last year.

-More-

News Release / P. 2

This increase in backyard breeding sources may lead to a rise in West Nile virus transmission. West Nile virus is spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes and may lead to debilitating health conditions such as encephalitis, paralysis, coma and even death.

In 2007, 380 human cases of West Nile virus were reported in California resulting in 21 deaths. There were a total of 43 human infections and 3 fatalities in Los Angeles County alone. The deaths were the first in the County since the major West Nile virus outbreak in 2004.

This year, West Nile virus activity has already been detected in 5 counties in California including San Diego and Riverside. The California Department of Public Health predicts the virus will again pose a serious public health threat in 2008.

The best defense against disease transmission is being proactive and taking precautions to protect from mosquito bites. Follow these simple steps to protect yourself and your family:

- Avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeve shirts and pants when engaging in outdoor activities during these hours.
- Apply approved insect repellents containing active ingredients such as DEET, Picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Keep tight-fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water around your home and property and properly maintain ornamental ponds, pools, and spas.
- Contact the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District at (562)944-9656 to report any significant mosquito problems in your neighborhood or visit online at www.glacvcd.org.

Frequently Asked Questions About Green Swimming Pools

How do I keep mosquitoes from breeding in my pool?

You can prevent mosquito breeding by properly maintaining your pool using chlorine and a filter system. Prevent the growth of algae by using appropriate chemicals. Consult a pool professional for further instructions.

Will I get cited if my pool is green?

The California State Health and Safety Code authorizes public health agencies to levy fines up to \$1,000 a day if the pool is declared a public health risk.

I drained my pool a few years ago. What can I do with rain water that puddles at the bottom of the pool?

Treat the accumulated water with chlorine and other approved chemicals to prevent mosquito breeding. Upon request, the District will also deliver free mosquitofish to residents for placement in backyard swimming pools, ponds, and fountains.

My city has instituted mandatory water conservation measures which prohibit me from adding any water to my pool. What can I do to prevent mosquito breeding?

Follow the steps above to prevent mosquito breeding and be sure to notify the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District if mosquito control services are required.

Where can I go for more information?

You can contact the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District by calling (562)944-9656 or visiting our website at www.glacvcd.org. The California Department of Public Health is also a great source for up-to-date information on West Nile virus. Visit www.westnile.ca.gov or call the department's toll-free hotline to report a dead bird at 877-WNV-BIRD.