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Stanislaus County Reports West Nile Virus Death

Stanislaus County officials are reporting the death of a 74 year old man from West Nile virus (WNV). "This serves as a warning that WNV is a serious disease that may lead to hospitalization and can even result in death," said Dr. Julie Vaishampayan, Public Health Officer, who cautioned that older adults and those with weak immune systems have the highest risk of serious WNV infection or the neuroinvasive symptoms of the disease such as meningitis, encephalitis, and paralysis. WNV season extends into October in Stanislaus County so it is important for residents to continue to take precautions to prevent mosquito bites.

To date in 2017, Stanislaus County Public Health has reported five cases of neuroinvasive WNV, seven cases of West Nile fever, and three asymptomatic infections in blood donors; an additional 20 cases remain under investigation. The delay in finalizing these investigations is due to the detection of St. Louis encephalitis virus in our mosquito population, requiring additional testing to differentiate between these infections. The age range of symptomatic cases was from 21 to 77 years old.

WNV is spread to humans primarily through bites by infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become infected by biting birds carrying the virus. The virus cannot be spread through person-to-person contact or directly from birds to humans.

There is no specific treatment for the disease and recovery from the neuroinvasive form of the disease can take more than a year, with the potential for ongoing physical and mental impairment.

Stanislaus County residents can protect themselves and their families by following these simple steps:

DEET – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions to keep mosquitoes from biting you. Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing. DEET can be used safely on infants and children two months of age and older.

DAWN AND DUSK – Mosquitoes that carry WNV tend to bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at these times. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes, and repair or replace screens with tears or holes.

DRESS – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure to mosquito bites (i.e., long pants and long-sleeved shirts).

DRAIN – Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including unused flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters, or pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish or commercially-available products to eliminate mosquito larvae. Neglected swimming pools are also prime for mosquito breeding. The East Side and Turlock Mosquito Abatement Districts are available to help with neglected pools in the prevention of mosquito development. To request District service:

- East Side, call 209-522-4098 or visit the website at www.eastsidemosquito.com
- Turlock, call 209-634-1234 or visit the website at www.turlockmosquito.org.

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Reporting and testing of dead birds also helps in locating areas needing treatment. To report a dead bird, call the West Nile virus dead bird and mosquito hotline at 1-877-WNV-BIRD, or submit a report online at www.westnile.ca.gov.

Horse owners are also urged to consult their veterinarians about proper and timely WNV vaccinations.

Resources for Additional Information on WNV are:

- Stanislaus County Public Health website, <http://www.schsa.org/PublicHealth/>
- California Department of Public Health WNV website, www.westnile.ca.gov. This website includes the latest information on WNV activity in the state.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>

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