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Three New Confirmed Cases of West Nile Virus in Humans in Stanislaus County

STANISLAUS COUNTY – The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency announces three confirmed human cases of West Nile Virus infection in Stanislaus County. All three cases resulted in West Nile Virus Fever and did not require hospitalization. The infection was confirmed in a 59-year old male, a 75-year-old female, and a 49-year-old female. These are the first symptomatic cases reported in Stanislaus County this year.

These confirmed cases bring the county's total count of WNV infection in humans to four confirmed reports so far this year, which represents a third of last year's total. The fourth reported infection comes nearly three weeks earlier than the fourth reported infection from last year's reports.

“These early cases and the overall statewide increase of West Nile Virus infection suggests the virus may be a greater risk this year than it was last year,” said Dr. John Walker, Stanislaus County Public Health Officer. “The number of people infected with WNV normally increases in mid-August, which makes these early reports a little concerning.”

WNV infection has increased statewide with 56 cases of WNV in humans reported at the end of July, compared to 20 confirmed human infections reported at the same time last year. Confirmed cases of birds and mosquitoes have also increased. As of July 27 this year, WNV has been confirmed in 423 birds and 317 mosquito samples, compared to 219 birds and 277 mosquito samples reported at the same time in 2006.

Stanislaus County officials have reported WNV infection in 67 dead birds and 13 mosquito samples throughout the county. While most of the local cities have had at least one confirmed case of WNV infection in dead birds, the large majority of the birds are from the 95350 and 95355 zip codes.

“The number of birds and mosquitoes confirmed to have West Nile Virus is an important measure of the threat that the virus poses to the general public,” said Lloyd Douglas, Director of the Eastside Mosquito Abatement District. “Stanislaus County residents, especially those in Modesto, need to make every effort to help control the mosquito population by eliminating breeding grounds on their property and reporting mosquito infestations to the mosquito abatement districts.”

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The Eastside and Turlock Mosquito Abatement Districts have already increased mosquito-control spraying efforts, and have targeted areas with high levels of WNV activity. However, some of these areas have proven to be especially challenging but not due to any typical reasons.

“We’ve had a very difficult time gaining access to poorly maintained backyard pools and ponds of homes going through the foreclosure process,” said Jerry Davis, Director of the Turlock Mosquito Abatement District. “We’re not legally able to enter the backyard of these vacant homes without the permission of the owner. In most cases the owners are gone and the lenders don’t have the authority to grant us access. This problem is forcing us to leave mosquito-breeding habitats in several neighborhoods untreated.”

To Prevent Mosquito Bites:

Insect repellent should be applied any time you go outside, but it is especially important when mosquitoes are most active just after sundown and just before sunrise. To be effective, repellent should contain DEET, Picaridin, or lemon oil of Eucalyptus. When you must go outdoors, wear long pants and sleeves, and other protective clothing to prevent mosquito bites.

To Eliminate Mosquito-Breeding Grounds:

Keeping your environment clear of mosquito-breeding grounds is always a good plan, and the best way to do that is to simply eliminate sources of standing water. Some examples of this include: not over-watering your lawn or garden, changing water in pet dishes and bird baths on a regular basis, and dumping any standing water out of backyard toys, flower pots and garbage cans.

To report mosquito-breeding problem areas, Stanislaus County residents should contact one of the two mosquito abatement districts that serve the county. Residents with addresses north of the Tuolumne River should call the Eastside Mosquito Abatement District at 522-4098 and all others should contact the Turlock Mosquito Abatement District at 634-1234.

For more information, call the West Nile virus hotline at (209) 558-8425 to hear recorded information in both English and Spanish. You can also visit www.stanemergency.com for WNV information. The website includes maps showing locations of WNV-infected mosquito samples, dead birds, and horses.

The State of California is still requesting that residents of Stanislaus County report dead birds to the state hotline at 1-877-WNV-BIRD. Birds of particular interest to the state are crows, ravens, magpies, jays and raptors (hawk or eagle). The public may also submit the information via the web site www.westnile.ca.gov.

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