



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

For Immediate Release

June 8, 2004

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West Nile Virus Activity Increasing in Los Angeles County

The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD) received confirmation from the California Department of Health Services and the UC Davis arbovirus diagnostic laboratory, mosquitoes submitted on May 17 and 19, 2004 tested positive for West Nile virus in the cities of La Mirada, Pico Rivera, South Gate, and Downey. First detection of West Nile virus in Los Angeles County mosquitoes was confirmed on May 6, 2004 in the City of Pico Rivera, along the San Gabriel River corridor.

Recent West Nile virus positive mosquitoes from the cities of Pico Rivera, South Gate, and Downey were collected along the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel rivers, correlating that mosquito-bird interaction in these wetland type habitats are amplifying West Nile virus. "Positive mosquitoes from several locations throughout Los Angeles County strongly indicates that West Nile virus activity is rapidly increasing," states Scientific-Technical Services Director Mino Madon. No human cases have yet been reported from California this year, however, the public should be aware that West Nile virus activity is currently in progress.

The District is stepping-up mosquito surveillance and control efforts in areas where the virus is active by posting warning signs in recreational areas along the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo rivers, and nearby parks. "We are asking people who are active in these areas to take precautions during evening and early morning hours when mosquitoes are most prevalent," says Public Information Officer Stephanie Miladin.

Along with West Nile virus positive mosquitoes, 16 dead birds collected between May 21-25, 2004, in the cities of Bell Gardens, Cerritos, Hacienda Heights, Harbor City, La Mirada, Reseda, Santa Fe Springs, and Whittier tested positive for West Nile virus. A total of 39 birds tested positive for West Nile virus within the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District's boundaries since March 8, 2004. West Nile virus has also been confirmed in birds from Orange, 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 live, sick birds. To discard a dead bird, wear rubber or latex gloves, or a plastic bag turned inside-out over your hand and invert the bag to surround the dead bird. Residents can discard the dead bird(s) in the trash or call to have them picked-up for West Nile virus testing by

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calling the CA State Health Department at 1-877-WNV-BIRD. Crows, ravens, jays and magpies less than 24-hours dead will be picked-up for testing.

According to the Centers for 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:

- Mosquitoes breed in standing water. 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.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants outdoors, especially at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are active.
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET.
- Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.

To find out more, visit www.wipeoutwestnile.com or www.glacvcd.org.