



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

For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus Warning Signs Posted in Los Angeles County

More West Nile virus positive mosquitoes were collected by the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD), and confirmed on Friday, June 11, 2004 by the California Department of Health Services and the UC Davis arbovirus diagnostic laboratory. The first positive mosquitoes were reported on May 6, 2004 in the City of Pico Rivera, with a total of 14 confirmed positive mosquito pools from Los Angeles County this year.

To better safeguard the public's health, GLACVCD posted West Nile virus warning signs in the following areas: Harbor Lake within Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City, Whittier Narrows Nature Preserve in South El Monte, San Gabriel River corridor in Pico Rivera, and the Lakewood Golf Course in Lakewood.

"We are not discouraging recreational activities in these areas during day time hours, but asking the public to take precautions by wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants and apply mosquito repellent with the active ingredient DEET when outdoors at dawn and dusk," says District Manager Jack Hazelrigg, Ph.D.

West Nile virus spreads when mosquitoes bite infected birds and consequently transmit the virus to humans and animals through future bites. "Once the virus is in the mosquito population, it significantly increases the risk of disease transmission to people and animals," states Mino Madon, Scientific Technical Services Director for the District. By forewarning the public to take preventative steps will lower their chances of acquiring West Nile virus. The District is also increasing mosquito surveillance and control efforts in areas where the virus is active.

Areas with positive West Nile virus mosquitoes are also experiencing an increase in dead birds, especially crows, since they are highly susceptible to the virus and die. A total of 33 dead birds collected between May 25-June 1, in the cities of Cerritos, Downey, Hacienda Heights, La Mirada, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, and Whittier tested positive for West Nile virus. Since March 8, 2004, 76 birds tested positive for West Nile virus within GLACVCD and 166 birds throughout Los Angeles County, surpassing last year's total of 65 West Nile virus positive birds. West Nile virus is not spread by person-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.

-More-

News Fax / P. 2

Approximately 80% of people who are infected with West Nile virus experience no symptoms. Of the 20% who become ill, symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, skin, rash, and/or swollen lymph nodes. Initially, these symptoms were considered mild and not long lasting, but in recent findings, symptoms can last up to three weeks and may lead to permanent neurological damage. It is estimated that 1 in 150 people who are infected will require hospitalization with intensive supportive therapy.

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

- 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 loose, light colored, 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.

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