

# Solano County Health & Social Services Department

Mental Health Services  
Public Health Services  
Substance Abuse Services  
Older & Disabled Adult Services



Patrick O. Duterte

Eligibility Services  
Employment Services  
Children's Services  
Administrative Services

Public Health Division  
**Ronald W. Chapman, MD, MPH**  
Health Officer/Deputy Director  
**(707) 784-8600**

275 Beck Avenue  
P.O. Box 4090, MS 5-240  
Fairfield, CA 94533-4090  
**FAX (707) 421-6618**

July 26, 2004

CONTACTS: Ronald W. Chapman, MD, MPH, Health Officer/Deputy Dir., (707) 784-8600  
Robin Cox, MPH, Health Education Manager/PIO, (707) 784-8600

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE STEPS TO PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS

As dead crows test positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in several northern and central California counties and as the State Department of Health Services last week announced the first human death from WNV in Southern California, health officials in Solano County are urging the public to take preventive steps that will help decrease the spread of the virus and the risk of contracting WNV.

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus. The mosquitoes become infected by feeding on the blood of infected birds and pass it on to people and animals by biting them. Only certain species of mosquitoes carry the virus.

To date, 42 Californians have tested positive for WNV, all in southern California. Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Approximately 10-15 percent of infected people will have only mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. Less than one percent of people will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis and meningitis. The elderly and those with lowered immune systems are more susceptible to serious illness.

"While there have been no confirmed human cases or dead birds that have tested positive for West Nile Virus to date in Solano County, we want to urge community members to take steps to prevent as many infections as possible," said Ronald Chapman, MD, MPH, health officer with Solano County Health and Social Services.

In fact, said Chapman, "there are many ways the public can protect themselves from exposure to mosquitoes."

-more-

Prevention tips for decreasing exposure include:

- Avoid mosquitoes; especially at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are out the most; be especially careful during the first two hours after sunset.
- Wear long sleeves, socks, and long pants when outside.
- Use mosquito repellent with the active ingredient, DEET, according to label directions.
- Ensure all window screens are in good repair with no holes or rips.

"We are encouraging all households to help our staff eliminate breeding grounds for mosquitoes," said Jon Blegen, district manager for Solano County Mosquito Abatement District. "Often people are not aware that mosquitoes can lay their eggs in as little as a tablespoon of standing water."

Prevention tips for decreasing the production of mosquitoes include:

- Eliminate standing or stagnant water; check drains, tires, swings, gutters, flower pots.
- Store buckets and gardening containers upside down.
- Empty and refill bird baths or fountains at least every 2-3 days.
- Maintain swimming pools with appropriate levels of chemicals and use pumps and filters daily to circulate water.
- Do not over-water lawns.
- Stock ornamental ponds or water troughs with mosquito fish (that eat mosquitoes). These can be picked up free of charge by calling Solano County Mosquito Abatement District at (707) 437-1116.

"It is important for the public to participate in the California Department of Health Service's (CDHS) WNV surveillance program. The presence of WNV in a community is often preceded by the death of certain birds species that serve as carriers for the disease," explained Terry Schmidtbauer, Solano County Environmental Health Manager.

"One of the best ways for the public to assist with our efforts to detect and monitor WNV," said Schmidtbauer, "is by calling the CDHS WNV hotline at 877- WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473) if you find a crow, raven, magpie, jay or raptor that appears to have been dead for less than a day."

## West Nile Virus - 3

Reports of dead birds may also be made on-line at: <http://westnile.ca.gov/>. Residents are advised to not attempt to handle the bird. If the bird is in Solano County and is determined to meet the criteria for testing, the California Department of Health Services will refer the information to the Solano County Mosquito Abatement district for pick up and shipping to a public health lab.

Horses are very susceptible to WNV. To date, 30 horses in California have tested positive for WNV. A vaccine for horses is available and horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarian to have their horses vaccinated.

For more information about WNV, visit [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

###