

# West Nile virus found in Butte County

Officials will fly over tonight and spray area



Mosquitoes usually feed at dusk and dawn and people are encouraged to wear long-sleeved shirts, pants and spray with repellent to help avoid West Nile virus. – Bill Husa —Enterprise-Record file photo

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HONCUT — The West Nile virus has officially landed in Butte County for the first time in 2019.

One pool in the Honcut area tested positive for the virus last Thursday. Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District officials confirmed the virus has arrived in the area and hope to contain it to their best efforts.

The virus has been identified in Butte County every year since its arrival in 2004. Since that time, 244 Butte County residents have been infected with the virus, nine of which have lost their lives, according to the Butte County Vector Control District.

“One positive sample has been found,” said Butte County Vector Control District Manager Matt Ball on Monday.

“The mosquitoes that tested positive for the virus were collected from from the Honcut area. This was a pool of trapped mosquitoes that we do our standard virus protection testing on.”

The mosquito pool was originally collected on July 16. The district received confirmation of the positive test on July 25. A mosquito pool is a group of 50 or less of the same species of mosquitoes, Ball said. This is done in order to get the best chance of finding a positive test with the resources provided to them.

The pool which tested positive was host to the most dangerous and susceptible type of mosquito for carrying the virus in Butte County, the “encephalitis mosquito” or *Culex tarsalis*. The *Culex pipiens*, or “northern house mosquito,” is also known for carrying the virus in Butte County.

Butte County health officials said Monday that typically, they see the first human case of West Nile in mid to late July, sometimes even as late as early August. Additionally, they warn the public to stay vigilant and seek more [information](#) on how to better protect yourself from mosquitoes this summer.

The Butte County Vector Control District offers some precautions people can take in order to better protect themselves from mosquitoes that potentially carry the deadly virus. Those precautions include the following:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are active, especially at dusk and dawn.
- If you must be outdoors when mosquitoes are active, wear long pants, and long-sleeved shirts, socks and shoes.
- Before going outdoors, apply insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens.
- Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all standing water on your property that can support mosquito-breeding.
- Report standing water to Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District at 530-533-6038.
- Contact Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live, work, and/or play.

Now, Ball says the district will continue with round-the-clock spraying and monitoring in a giant rotation throughout the county and it will be business as usual.

“We will take these measures all summer long. We are trying to kill these mosquitoes before they get into our town,” Ball said.

“Right now, we basically have a giant rotation set up where we deploy these traps and send them out overnight along the Camp Fire burn scar area, Biggs, Gridley, Honcut, Palermo, Richvale, Chico, Oroville, Magalia and even Hamilton City. We also trap in areas on the managed wetlands, rice fields and other agriculture lands in the county.”

Staff members will go back and monitor how active the virus is near the Honcut area, Ball said. “We tested four pools in Honcut and only got one pool that came back positive,” Ball said. “When West Nile Virus is in full swing, we can see up to three or four pools in the same area come back positive for the virus.”

Starting tonight, a vector control crop style plane will be flying over the Honcut area, Ball said. These planes have nozzles designed to distribute tiny particles of insecticide that work quite well on the mosquitoes. “We distribute very small volumes of this stuff over an entire acre of land,” Ball said. “Those tiny little droplets are enough to get on those mosquitoes and really get ’em.”

For more information, call the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District at 530-533-6038 or 530-342-7350. District staff are available to answer any questions from the public Monday through Thursday, 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.