

Glenn West Nile victim was hospitalized

By LARRY MITCHELL - Staff Writer, ChicoER.com
Posted: 09/02/2011 12:07:57 AM PDT

ORLAND — The Orland resident who recently became ill with West Nile virus is an elderly woman, according to Grinnell Norton, deputy director of public health for Glenn County.

Norton described the woman's illness as moderately severe and noted she had been hospitalized at Enloe Medical Center in Chico. She said she didn't know the woman's condition or if she was still in the hospital.

The case was made public Wednesday, when Glenn County health officials announced an adult had become ill with West Nile. The only other detail they provided was that the victim lived in south Orland.

Her home is in an area that has been sprayed with pesticides weekly by the Glenn County Mosquito and Vector Control District, Norton said. It's not known where the woman was when she was bitten by an infected mosquito, she noted.

The Orland case appears to be part of a spike in human cases of West Nile, according to a website maintained by the California Department of Public Health and other agencies.

Until about 10 days ago, there had been 12 human cases of West Nile in the state. Since then at least eight more cases have been reported, including Glenn County's.

Throughout California and especially in the north state, it's been a very light year for West Nile virus, said Matt Ball, manager of the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

In the north state, West Nile has been found only in Glenn, Sutter, Yolo and Placer counties, according to the website.

Glenn County is as far north as the virus has been detected.

From counties all over California, dead birds, squirrels and mosquitoes, as well as specimens from horses, chickens and humans are tested for West Nile virus. The results are reported to health officials.

Butte has been typical of north state counties this year, Ball said. Plenty of trapped mosquitoes have been sent off for testing, but none were positive for West Nile. Dead birds have not tested positive nor has blood from flocks of chickens that are kept for testing.

The virus is spread to humans by infected mosquitoes. Most people who are infected don't become sick. About 20 percent get what's called West Nile fever with symptoms like fever,

headaches and body aches. About one in 150 becomes severely ill with what's called a "neuroinvasive" form of the illness. Some of those with this type of disease die.

In California the numbers of human cases of West Nile and deaths from the illness have been declining since 2004, when such cases began occurring in significant numbers. That year, the state had 779 human cases and 29 deaths.

Last year in California, there were 111 human cases of West Nile and six deaths. So far this year, there have been 20 human cases of the disease.

By the end of September, when the weather starts cooling off, West Nile season generally winds down, Ball said. Nationally this year, 77 human cases of West Nile have been reported, and there have been three deaths, according to the website.

On the Internet

<http://westnile.ca.gov>

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