

Butte County at elevated risk for West Nile Virus

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49 groups of mosquitoes, 18 sentinel chickens, and 8 dead birds, are confirmed positive for West Nile virus

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District (District) has announced that West Nile virus (WNV) continues to remain extremely active. The District received confirmation that more mosquito pools, dead birds, and sentinel chickens have tested positive for WNV. This is the first detection of the virus in the sentinel chickens this year. The total number of mosquito pools (groups of the same species of mosquito) that have tested positive with WNV in 2015 is 49 (This is a record number of positive pools for our District. Last year 43 pools were positive by the end of October); the total number of sentinel chickens that have tested positive with WNV is 18; the total number of dead birds that have tested positive with WNV is 8. The WNV positive mosquitoes, birds, and chickens that tested positive were wide-spread throughout the county.

With increasing mosquito populations and the detection and wide-spread distribution of WNV within Butte County and Hamilton City, the District URGES residents to take all precautions necessary to drain any and all un-needed standing water, report any suspected mosquito-breeding sites to the District, and to protect themselves from the bites of mosquitoes. Matthew Ball, District Manager for the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District stated, "There are a lot of mosquitoes carrying the virus throughout our area. It's crucial that residents protect themselves from mosquitoes as they are only one mosquito bite away from possibly getting sick."

WNV activity is continuing to increase throughout the state and Butte County is following that trend. WNV has been identified in Butte County every year since its arrival in 2004. Since 2004, 154 residents have been infected with the virus, 7 of which have lost their lives due to the disease. The District has located the mosquito transmitted disease in Chico, Hamilton City, Paradise, Oroville, Palermo, Honcut, Biggs, Gridley, Richvale, Nelson, and rural areas along the west side of Butte County.

Residents should use mosquito repellents when they go outdoors, and/or wear long sleeves and long pants especially at the times when mosquitoes are most active (mornings and evenings). WNV is preventable; you only need to prevent the mosquito bite! The virus is usually prevalent from May through October when mosquitoes are most abundant. Mosquitoes contract the virus when they feed on infected birds, then spread the virus when the mosquitoes seek other hosts to bite.

In addition to birds and humans, horses are also affected by WNV. Due to the high mortality rate of horses that contract the disease, owners are encouraged to make sure their horses are kept current with their WNV vaccinations.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne disease by following these prevention tips:

- 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.

- Contact Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live, work, and/or play.

The public is encouraged to become part of the state's monitoring effort for WNV by reporting any dead birds that may have been dead for less than 48 hours. Please call 1-877-968-2473 to report dead birds that may be accepted for testing, or visit the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) website, www.westnile.ca.gov. Individuals should take note of the location and condition of the bird before calling for further instructions. 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 the birds.

The District requests any and all assistance by area residents to report any suspected mosquito-breeding sites and/or any mosquito activity. Reports can be made by phone at 530-533-6038 or 530-342-7350 or website at www.BCMVCD.com.

For more information call the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District at 530-533-6038 or 530-342-7350.