

Officials: Butte Co. residents at elevated risk for St. Louis Encephalitis virus

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BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. - For the first time since 1969, the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District has identified and confirmed the presence of St. Louis Encephalitis virus (SLEV) in a mosquito pool collected from the Honcut area.

Like West Nile Virus (WNV), SLEV is spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. SLEV is related to WNV. There is no cure for either virus but most people infected with WNV or SLEV have no apparent illness.

Initial symptoms of those who become ill include flu like symptoms such as fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, and tiredness. Severe neuroinvasive disease can occur. In rare cases, long-term disability or death can result. There is no specific treatment for SLEV or WNV; care is based on symptoms.

The District is expanding both its surveillance system and mosquito control efforts to reduce the risk of human infections.

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District received confirmation that three more mosquito pools and 16 more sentinel chickens have tested positive for West Nile Virus. In less than two months time, the District has identified WNV in 38 mosquito pools, two dead birds, and 25 sentinel chickens.

WNV activity is now widespread throughout the valley. The District has identified the virus in areas near or in Chico, Biggs, Dayton, Gridley, Richvale, Nelson, Palermo, Honcut, Hamilton City, and outlying agricultural areas.

With increasing mosquito populations, the detection and wide-spread distribution of WNV within Butte County, and the detection of SLEV, the District is urging 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.