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EL DORADO COUNTY Environmental Management Department Public Health Department



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West Nile Virus Season Approaches

Residents Urged to Report Dead Birds and Tree Squirrels and Eliminate Mosquito Breeding Sources

Warm weather is approaching and mosquitoes and West Nile virus (WNV) may not be far behind. The El Dorado County Environmental Management and Public Health departments are reminding residents that they can help prevent the spread of WNV by reporting dead birds and tree squirrels and eliminating mosquito breeding sources around the home. "Early, repeated mosquito prevention strategies have proven successful in controlling West Nile virus," said Virginia Huber, Division Manager for the El Dorado County Environmental Management Department. "To help reduce mosquito populations throughout the county, we are asking residents to identify and eliminate standing water sources on their property before they become mosquito breeding sites." April 23-29 is West Nile virus and Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week.

As of April 13, there have been no reported cases of human infection with WNV in California for 2007, however 15 dead birds and one horse have already tested positive for the virus in the state. Since the beginning of this year, several birds have been tested for WNV in El Dorado County; none have been positive for the virus so far. Because horses

are very susceptible to WNV, health and agriculture officials are advising horse owners to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations for their horses.

WNV surveillance and control activities are already in place in the County. “Each year, we learn how to battle West Nile virus more effectively,” said Huber. The El Dorado County Environmental Management Department operates a mosquito abatement program. According to Huber, El Dorado County’s extensive surveillance includes: reporting dead birds and tree squirrels, mosquito trapping, treating storm drains and other standing water sources to kill mosquito larvae, canvassing communities and providing door-to-door education. The public can become a part of WNV monitoring efforts by reporting dead birds and squirrels to the state. Reports can be made over the telephone at (877) WNV-BIRD (968-2473) or online at www.westnile.ca.gov. Information about local mosquito control and abatement programs can be found by calling (530) 543-3450 for Tahoe residents and (530) 621-5300 for west slope residents.

Because WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito, the El Dorado County Public Health Department continues to monitor human infections of WNV in the county. Physicians throughout the county routinely test for WNV in patients with meningitis or encephalitis. “Most people who become infected with West Nile virus do not experience symptoms or become ill. However, persons who develop symptoms of high fever, confusion, neck stiffness or muscle weakness should seek immediate medical attention,” said Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, M.D., County Health Officer.

“We need to incorporate WNV prevention into our normal, everyday routine,” advised Eberhart-Phillips. The best defense against West Nile virus is to reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. Eberhart-Phillips recommends the following WNV precautions:

- **Drain.** Empty all sources of standing water around property to reduce mosquito breeding. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, hot tubs and spas and keep them empty or covered when not in use. Keep ponds and animal water troughs circulating or treated with “Mosquito Dunks” or mosquito fish.
- **DEET.** Apply an insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or another approved substance on exposed skin when outdoors (always read and follow label instructions).
- **Dress.** Wear long sleeves and long pants when outdoors during peak mosquito hours or in areas where mosquitoes are active.
- **Dusk and Dawn.** Take extra precautions to prevent bites because mosquitoes are most active during these hours.

Additional information about WNV and prevention measures can be found on the following websites: www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/emd or www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/publichealth. Up-to-date local information is available on the El Dorado County West Nile Virus Hotlines - (530) 573-3405 or (530) 642-4968.

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