



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

PRESS RELEASE

Protect Yourself Against West Nile Virus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
26 June 2018

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The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has confirmed its first illnesses in California due to West Nile virus (WNV). CDPH has reported nine human cases of WNV from six California counties this year. In addition, 27 dead birds from 10 counties have tested positive for WNV in 2018 and 31 mosquito pools from seven counties have also tested positive for WNV this year.

The numbers of WNV positive human cases, dead birds and mosquito pools exceed the numbers at this same time last year. Our neighboring counties are impacted, with Fresno County reporting a human case and Santa Cruz a positive dead bird. San Benito County has not yet reported any positive findings.

“West Nile virus (WNV) can cause a deadly infection in humans, and the elderly are particularly susceptible,” said San Benito County Health Officer Dr. Newel. “West Nile virus activity in the state is increasing, so I urge everyone to take every possible precaution to protect themselves against mosquito bites.

West Nile virus is influenced by many factors, including climate, the number and types of birds and mosquitoes in an area and the level of WNV immunity in birds. West Nile is transmitted to humans and animals by the bite of an infected mosquito. The risk of serious illness to most people is low. However, some individuals – less than 1 percent – can develop serious neurologic illnesses such as encephalitis or meningitis.

People 50 years of age and older and individuals with diabetes or hypertension have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop complications.

CDPH recommends that individuals protect against mosquito bites and WNV by practicing the “Three Ds”:

1. **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep the mosquitoes from biting you. Insect repellents should not be used on children under two months of age.

2. **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes usually bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear proper clothing and repellent if outside during these times. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
3. **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, by emptying flower pots, old car tires, buckets, and other containers. If you know of a swimming pool that is not being properly maintained, please contact your local mosquito and vector control agency.

Horses are also susceptible to WNV. Currently there is no specific treatment for WNV in horses, but there are currently two approved WNV vaccine products available for horses. An initial series of at least two vaccinations followed by periodic booster injections is required with each. Horse owners are urged to consult their veterinary practitioners to ensure that the vaccination status of all their horses is current.

If you notice a significant mosquito problem where you live or work, contact the **San Benito County Agricultural Commissioner** at **831-637-5344** or **San Benito County Environmental Health** at **831-636-4035**. For health-related questions or concerns, please contact **San Benito County Public Health Services** at **831-637-5367** or go to San Benito Public Health Services website at <http://hhsa.cosb.us/>

If you see a bird, particularly if it is a crow, jay, magpie or raven that appears to have been dead less than 24 hours, call the **California West Nile Virus Hotline** at **1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473)** or visit [West Nile virus website](#)

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