



Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 16,
2010

PH10-068

CDPH REPORTS FIRST HUMAN WEST NILE VIRUS FATALITY OF 2010

SACRAMENTO - Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has claimed the life of an elderly woman in Fresno County. She is the first death this year in California from complications associated with the virus.

"This unfortunate death reminds us that we must take precautions to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites," Horton said. "The risk of WNV transmission continues well into the fall. We should all be taking all appropriate steps to avoid mosquito bites."

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Despite this fatality, the number of reported WNV illnesses in California is lower than last year. In 2009, for the same period this year, there were 47 human cases. This year 45 people in 11 California counties have been diagnosed with WNV.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. However, individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also indicate

that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

Horton said that the most effective ways for individuals to prevent exposure to mosquito bites and WNV are to remember the “Four D’s”:

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. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
2. DRESS – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure.
3. DAWN AND DUSK – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at this time. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.
4. DRAIN – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish (available from your local mosquito and vector control agency) or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

California’s [WNV Web site](http://westnile.ca.gov/) (<http://westnile.ca.gov/>) includes the latest information on WNV activity in the state. Californians are encouraged to report all dead birds and dead tree squirrels on the Web site or by calling toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (968-2473).

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