

**For Immediate Release:
August 6, 2008**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MOSQUITO CONTROL AGENCY PRESS ADVISORY

Southern California Vector Control Agencies Use Press Conference to Warn of West Nile Virus Threat

Garden Grove, CA: Orange County Vector Control District (OCVCD) hosted a press conference on behalf of the mosquito and vector control agencies in southern California . Prompted by an alarming increase in West Nile virus activity throughout the region, the agencies realized there was a responsibility to remind the public that their role in the shared responsibility of vector control will make a difference, and may save lives. Orange County Vector Control District Manager, Gerard Goedhart, opened the conference by stating that the “West Nile virus situation in southern California is severe ... is dangerous and everyone in southern California is threatened”.

The point made by Robert Cummings, OCVCD Scientific Technical Director was that in spite of additional breeding sites like abandoned swimming pools, the operational efforts by the mosquito control agencies are keeping mosquito populations suppressed. The problem is that this year the mosquitoes are more likely to be carrying the virus; in some areas the infection rate is twice the rate ever seen before. The greatest opportunity to reduce the possibility of WNV transmission is for the public to take steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Interviews with victims reveal that there was often little concern for personal protection. Open windows with no screens and eating dinner outdoors in the evening without wearing a suitable repellent are some of the practices admitted to by WNV victims.

As of August 1 the number of human cases in southern California was 22. That number had grown to 31 by August 6. August and September are when the most humans have been diagnosed in past years. Another cause for concern about the virus in 2008 is the high percentage of human cases that develop into the more serious form of the disease. Statewide, 70% of the human cases are the neuroinvasive form. This is nearly twice the expected rate and is another reason for the public to take personal protection more seriously.

In response to this growing threat, mosquito control agencies' will launch an educational radio campaign to remind the public that their individual actions will make a difference. The campaign will emphasize personal protection steps such as eliminating or reporting standing water, repairing and replacing window screens and wearing an approved repellent. Funding for the campaign will come directly from the southern California mosquito agencies themselves.

For more information on West Nile virus or to find out how to contact your local vector control agency, visit www.westnile.ca.gov.

**Southern California Regional
WNV Press Conference**

August 5, 2008

*Representing the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, San
Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino*

The Reason for the Press Conference

- West Nile Virus in Southern California is **severe.**
- The West Nile Virus situation in Southern California is **dangerous.**
- The Public of Southern California is **threatened** by this situation and must take this threat seriously to avoid another human epidemic.

**Southern California is the Epicenter of
WNV Activity in California**

- Positive Mosquito Pools
 - Southern California has **51%** of all positive mosquito pools in California.
- WNV Positive Dead Birds
 - Southern California has **71%** of all WNV positive dead birds in California.
- Human WNV Cases
 - Southern California has **76%** of all Human WNV cases in California.
 - Last week 16 of 17 (94%) human cases were from Southern California.

Source: www.westnile.ca.gov

**Southern California is the Epicenter of
WNV Activity in California**

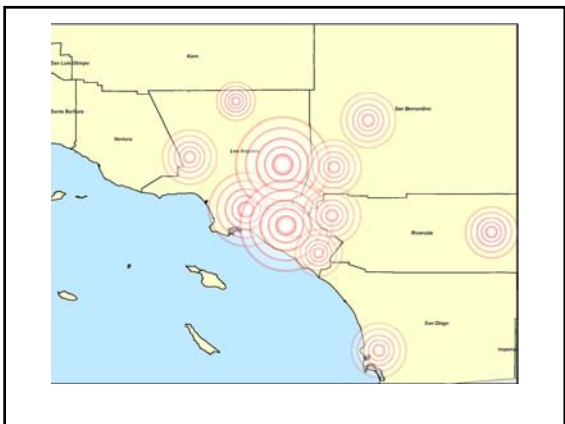
- Over 21 Million people live in Southern California.
- WNV is a threat to all of them
 - WNV has infected individuals from 6 months to 96 years of age.
- The current WNV situation is similar to the epidemic conditions faced in Southern California during 2004.
 - Southern California experienced 710 human WNV cases with 21 fatalities.

What is being done?

- Districts are at a heightened level of mosquito control and disease surveillance.
- Public Health Agencies are reminding the medical community to be aware of WNV infection in humans.
- Agencies are informing the public about the WNV threat and the need to take proper precautions to avoid exposure.

Public Information Campaign

- The Vector Control Agencies of Southern California are announcing a WNV public education radio campaign.
 - All agencies are participating in this venture.
 - Campaign will begin in mid August.
 - The focus is to remind the public that personal protection will make a difference in facing this severe threat in Southern California.



Important Points to Consider

- Human cases of West Nile virus infection are occurring at a rate nearly 5 times higher in 2008 compared to the previous three years (2005 – 2007) in Southern California.
- About 80% of human cases of West Nile virus infection occur after July during the months of August – October. We may be seeing only the beginning of a large number of future cases in Southern California.
- 70% of the victims of West Nile virus infection in 2008 have contracted the more serious, neurological form of the disease, West Nile Neuroinvasive Disease (WNND).

Role of the Public

- It's important for the public to report any neglected swimming pools to their local vector control agency:

Vector Control Districts are servicing 10 times the number of neglected swimming pools as last year, because of the home foreclosure crisis.

- Avoid getting Bitten by Mosquitoes:

Make sure windows have screens on them

If you go outside at night, wear protective clothing (long-sleeved shirts and pants). Apply mosquito repellent (DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus)