



Press Release

MOSQUITO and VECTOR MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
of SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

www.mvmdistrict.org

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CONTACT: Brian Passaro, General Manager

Telephone: (805) 969-5050 ext. 222

FIRST POSITIVE TEST FOR WEST NILE VIRUS IN 2009 REPORTED IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

A Yellow-Billed Magpie found on June 24, 2009 in the Happy Canyon region of the Santa Ynez Valley has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first positive dead bird for Santa Barbara County in 2009. Last year only one (1) dead bird from Santa Barbara County tested positive for WNV.

It must be emphasized that mosquitoes and birds occur in all areas of Santa Barbara County. Mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases do not respect political boundaries or property lines. **All areas of Santa Barbara County should be presumed to be at risk for West Nile Virus.**

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-transmitted virus passed primarily between birds by mosquitoes. Humans, horses, and other animals can become infected with WNV if bitten by an infected mosquito. Although most people exhibit no symptoms, the elderly and individuals with suppressed immune systems are at greatest risk for more serious, and potentially life threatening illness.

As of July 8, 2009, West Nile Virus has been detected in at least twenty five (25) of fifty eight (58) counties in California. Five (5) sentinel chickens in two (2) counties, ninety-seven (97) live mosquito pools from twelve (12) counties, and one hundred thirty-nine (139) dead birds from twenty four (24) counties have been reported in California this year. There have been no human

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GENERAL MANAGER: Brian Passaro

*As defined under State law, a **vector** is any insect or other arthropod, rodent, or other animal of public health importance capable of causing human discomfort, injury, or capable of harboring or transmitting the causative agents of disease.*

*This agency is an independent **Special District** as a form of local government.*

or horse cases reported thus far in 2009. This dead bird has been the only WNV activity detected in Santa Barbara County thus far this season.

Typically, infection in wild birds precedes infections in humans by only a few weeks. It is therefore critical that residents take precautions now to protect themselves from mosquito bites and take measures to eliminate mosquito breeding around their homes:

- Avoid outdoor activity when mosquitoes are most active – from dusk until dawn.
- If outdoors, wear protective clothing and apply mosquito repellants according to label directions – those containing DEET have been proven to be the most effective.
- Ensure door and window screens are secured and in good repair to prevent mosquito entrance into homes.
- Eliminate standing and stagnant water. Eggs are laid and immature mosquitoes develop in dirty pools & spas, ponds, bird baths, buckets, barrels, children's toys etc. Immature mosquitoes become biting adults in 5-7 days.
- Free mosquito-eating fish are available to South County residents for permanent closed water sources (ponds, troughs, large fountains) at the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County office. These fish cannot be placed in natural wetlands or waterways of the United States as they can adversely impact native fishes and wildlife.
- Horse owners should contact their veterinarian to have their horses vaccinated for West Nile Virus and to keep the vaccinations up to date.
- Contact the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County immediately at (805) 969-5050 to report mosquito problems or green pools/spas.

In coordination with State Department of Public Health and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, the District employs an integrated mosquito management approach focusing on disease surveillance, vector control, and public outreach to reduce mosquito populations and minimize the risk of mosquito-transmitted disease. The Vector Management District maintains five (5) sentinel chicken flocks at strategic locations in the county and also conducts trapping surveys for live mosquitoes at many locations countywide, in addition to retrieving dead birds for West Nile Virus testing. Not all portions of Santa Barbara County receive enhanced mosquito abatement. The Vector Control District provides full, organized mosquito and vector management only in urban areas of the South County. This proactive approach, although inherently more difficult, provides the most effective and environmentally sound mosquito control possible in our urban environments.

Dead birds serve as early warning sentinels that the virus is being transmitted. Residents are urged to assist our District and the State by reporting dead bird sightings to the toll free WNV hotline by calling **1-877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473)** or online at **www.westnile.ca.gov**. Additional information or requests for service can be obtained from the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County at www.mvmdistrict.org or **(805) 969-5050**. The Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County will accept reports of standing water and possible mosquito breeding sources throughout Santa Barbara County.

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