



For Immediate Release
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California's wet winter could lead to an early mosquito season and increased virus transmission
Mosquito Awareness Week educates California residents on preventing mosquito-borne viruses

SACRAMENTO, APRIL 13, 2017 – As California's extremely wet winter comes to a close, mosquito experts throughout the state are ramping up for what will most likely be an early and active mosquito season. While the heavy rains were good for the state's historic drought, they also produce new sources of standing water, the ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes and warm weather go hand in hand. Spring temperatures will further determine how early and aggressive the mosquito season will be.

With potentially the perfect storm of conditions for mosquito activity, Californians need to be aware of the serious risks mosquitoes present to their health including West Nile, Saint Louis encephalitis, and potentially dengue, chikungunya, and Zika viruses.

To raise awareness and educate Californians about the threat mosquitoes pose to our communities, the California Legislature declared April 16-22, 2017 as Mosquito Awareness Week.

"It is critical that California residents understand how to protect themselves from mosquito-borne diseases at home and abroad. While Zika must be taken seriously, West Nile virus is an existing threat in counties throughout our state," said Assemblymember Mike Gipson, author of Assembly Concurrent Resolution 51. "Educating residents on the risks we have at home is just as important as preventing travel-associated cases of Zika."

West Nile virus continues to be a threat to Californians with more than 2,000 cases in just the last three years and a record number of deaths (53) in 2015 associated with the disease. In 2016, there were 442 cases of West Nile virus reported in 30 counties, with 329 individuals developing the more serious neuroinvasive form of the disease. Of those there were 19 deaths. Additionally, California reported 527 travel-associated cases of Zika virus, including 102 infections in pregnant women and five infants born with complications. There have been no reported local mosquito transmitted Zika virus cases in California to date.

"While predicting the level of West Nile virus activity year to year is impossible, it is critical that we keep a close watch on contributing factors such as climate, heavy winter rains, warming temperatures, and the number and species of birds and mosquitoes in an area," said Jamie Scott, President of the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California (MVCAC). "Additionally, education is key to protection and prevention of mosquito-borne diseases. Local mosquito control districts and public agencies must

continue to work together with their communities to best protect the health of more than 38 million Californians.”

To minimize exposure to mosquito bites:

1. Before going outdoors:
 - a. Apply insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients, including DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 according to label instructions. Repellents keep mosquitoes from biting. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
 - b. Dress in long sleeves and pants.

2. At home:
 - a. Install screens on windows and doors and keep them in good repair.
 - b. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including in flower pots, old tires, and buckets. **Remember:** mosquitoes can lay their eggs in sources of water as small as a bottle cap. If you are being bitten by mosquitoes during the day, please contact your local mosquito and vector control agency.

For additional information on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/MosquitoBorneDiseases.aspx>

Travelers should refer to the CDC’s Travel Advisories:

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

To increase awareness and enforce prevention and control programs statewide, the MVCAC provides support to more than 65 districts throughout California. As a result, approximately half the land area and 85 percent of California’s population are within the boundaries of a mosquito control program.

MVCAC represents special districts, other subdivisions of local government, and the state of California which are responsible for mosquito and vector control, surveillance of WNV and other vector-borne diseases, as well as public education programs to help Californians protect themselves from disease. MVCAC advocates safe, effective, and environmentally friendly methods of mosquito and vector control.