



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Current Focus on Public Health Reinforces the Need for Residents to Protect Themselves from Mosquito-Borne Diseases**

*Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week educates California residents about preventing mosquito-borne viruses*

**SACRAMENTO, APRIL 16, 2020** -- [Mosquito experts](#) throughout the state say the increased attention on public health is an excellent reminder that there are many ways for residents to protect themselves from other viruses transmitted by infected mosquitoes.

While COVID-19 is not transmitted by mosquitoes, they can transmit several other diseases. West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne disease that has impacted the lives of California residents since 2003. There is no human vaccine for West Nile virus which can cause debilitating cases of meningitis, encephalitis, and even death.

“As we enter mosquito season, I urge all residents to take precautions to protect themselves from mosquito-transmitted diseases,” said Senator Henry Stern. “Having lost a dear friend to West Nile virus, I can tell you how real and devastating the risks are. By raising awareness and encouraging individual action, we can protect health and save lives.”

To raise awareness and educate Californians about the public health threat mosquitoes pose to our communities Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week is observed April 19-25, 2020.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder that we must protect ourselves from all public health threats including mosquito-transmitted diseases,” said Assemblymember Bill Quirk. “Mosquito control is essential and it’s critical that residents understand that we all play an important part in helping to eliminate mosquitoes from our communities.”

After a rainy spring, there are many areas of stagnant water, which can create mosquito breeding sites. Mosquitoes can lay their eggs in sources of water as small as a bottle cap and can complete their life cycle, from egg to adult, in about a week.

“With many Californians at home right now under stay-at-home orders, it’s a good time to check around properties and yards for mosquito sources,” said Peter Bonkrude, president of the [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#) (MVCAC). “Children who are home

from school can help check yards and learn about the importance of dumping and draining all standing water. Checking flowerpots, buckets, and other backyard sources is an easy and very important activity.”

West Nile virus remains the largest mosquito-related public health threat in the state. In 2019, there were 225 human West Nile virus disease cases from 27 counties in California, including six human deaths. Since 2003, more than 7,000 human disease cases were reported including more than 300 deaths.

Climate change has facilitated the spread of two invasive mosquito species, *Aedes albopictus* and *Aedes aegypti*, throughout the state and they are now in 16 counties. Invasive *Aedes* exploit small and cryptic water sources and are vectors of Zika, dengue fever, chikungunya, yellow fever, and dog heartworm. There are no human vaccines for chikungunya and Zika viruses, both of which are costly to treat and can have long-term health and financial consequences.

For more information check out these videos: [Everyone Can Help Fight the Bite! and Mosquito Control is an Essential Service.](#)

**To minimize exposure to mosquito bites:**

- Apply insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients, including DEET, picaridin, 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.
- Dress in loose-fitting long sleeves and pants.
- Install screens on windows and doors and keep them in good repair.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including in flowerpots, old tires, buckets, pet dishes, and trash cans.
- Repair leaking faucets and broken sprinklers.
- Clean rain gutters clogged with leaves.

For additional information on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases please visit the [California Department of Public Health.](#)

**About MVCAC**

*The [Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California](#) (MVCAC) is the statewide voice for mosquito and vector control professionals. The association provides public health information, expertise, mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance, innovative research, professional training, effective legislative and regulatory advocacy on behalf of California public agencies.*