



Press Release

MOSQUITO and VECTOR MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
of SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

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LIVE MOSQUITOES FROM GOLETA VALLEY TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

A sample of live mosquitoes collected adjacent to the Devereux Lagoon on the West Campus of UCSB on August 4, 2006 has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first time that WNV has been detected in Santa Barbara County in 2006. The mosquitoes in the sample were Encephalitis Mosquitoes (*Culex tarsalis*), a species that readily feeds on birds, humans, and other animals, and poses the greatest risk for transmitting WNV to humans.

The Devereux Lagoon is normally dry during the summer months. However, very late spring 2006 rains refilled the lagoon along with many other seasonal wetlands that are normally dry by summer. This abundant water combined with record-setting hot weather (hot weather accelerates the mosquitoes' lifecycle) has resulted in very high mosquito populations in summer 2006. Mosquito and Vector Management District (MVMD) personnel have treated the Devereux Lagoon with mosquito larvicide several times in summer 2006 in an effort to reduce the population of the mosquitoes that breed in the lagoon. It must be emphasized that even though the disease has initially appeared in the Goleta Valley, mosquitoes and birds occur in all areas of Santa Barbara County. Mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases do not respect political boundaries or property lines. In 2005, WNV was detected in many parts of Santa Barbara County, so **all areas of the County should be presumed to be at risk for West Nile Virus.** See below for the full list of precautions that individuals should take.

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.

In California, for 2006 to date, West Nile Virus has been detected in at least 41 of the 58 counties. In California during 2005, there were 880 confirmed human cases (19 fatal) of WNV including 2 in Santa Barbara County along with 456 horse cases (200 fatal) including 6 in Santa Barbara County (3 fatal). 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, Picaridin, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus 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 water sources (ponds, troughs, large fountains) at the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County.
- 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.

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 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.sbcvcd.org or **(805) 969-5050**. The Mosquito and Vector Management District will accept reports of standing water and possible mosquito breeding sources in Santa Barbara County.