



# Press Release

SANTA BARBARA COASTAL VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

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**CONTACT:** Mitchell Bernstein, District Manager      **Telephone:** (805) 969-5050 ext. 222

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## **WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN NORTHERN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**

### **STATE FUNDS AWARDED TO DISTRICT TO COMBAT WEST NILE VIRUS**

More West Nile Virus (WNV) has been detected in Santa Barbara County, including **northern Santa Barbara County**. Ten more dead birds have tested positive for the disease, bringing the County's total to 25 for 2005 to date. One of the dead birds was found in the City of Buellton near the Santa Ynez River. The other nine dead birds were recovered in the City of Santa Barbara and in the Goleta Valley.

Also, Santa Barbara County's first horse case of West Nile Virus has been confirmed from the 93105 zip code. The 93105 zip code covers a large region including north Santa Barbara, Camino Cielo, Paradise Road, and Lake Cachuma, but **NOT** the Goleta Valley as some news outlets have been reporting. Confidentiality and privacy rules prevent a more specific disclosure of the horse's location. The horse began having symptoms of WNV on July 14, 2005 and died about a week later. WNV was confirmed as the cause of death on July 27, 2005. The horse was reportedly unvaccinated. Although there has been heavy WNV activity in the Goleta Valley recently, it should NOT be construed that WNV is limited to the Goleta Valley area. **Mosquitoes and wild birds are found throughout Santa Barbara County and all areas of the County are vulnerable to the disease.**

The Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District was recently awarded \$200,000 in funds from the State of California to control the spread of West Nile Virus in California. The funds will be used to purchase additional mosquito control equipment and materials and to increase

manpower. A portion of the funds will be used to expand control efforts to unincorporated areas of the SBCVCD in northern Santa Barbara County where there are currently no mosquito abatement services. North County cities are not part of the Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District and will not be receiving any of the benefit of the State funds.

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 2005 to date, West Nile Virus has been detected in at least 45 of the 58 counties. There have been 31 human cases (one fatal) so far in 2005 along with 48 confirmed horse cases (24 fatal), sentinel chickens in 3 counties (more pending), live mosquitoes in 21 counties, and 619 dead birds.

In 2004, West Nile Virus was confirmed in all 58 California counties. There were 828 human cases (27 fatal), 536 horse cases (about half fatal), and 3,232 positive dead birds. Most of the affected horses were unvaccinated or the vaccinations were not up to date.

Nationwide in 2003, nearly 10,000 humans were infected and 264 died from West Nile Virus. 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 Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District.
- 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 Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District immediately at (805) 969-5050 to report mosquito problems or green pools/spas.

In coordination with State Department of Health Services 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 Control District maintains 6 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 mosquito abatement. The Vector Control District provides full, organized mosquito control 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 WNV hotline by calling **1-877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473)** or online at **[www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)**. Additional information or requests for mosquito control service can be obtained from the Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District at [www.sbcvcd.org](http://www.sbcvcd.org) or **(805) 969-5050**. The Santa Barbara Coastal Vector Control District will accept reports of standing water and possible mosquito breeding sources in Santa Barbara County.