

Ventura County Public Health News Release

Ventura County Public Health, A division of the Ventura Health Care Agency

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First human case of West Nile Virus reported in Ventura County

(EAST VENTURA COUNTY, Calif.) – Ventura County's first human case of acute West Nile Virus (WNV) was recently reported to officials of Ventura County Public Health's Communicable Disease Program. (VCPH). According to Dr. Robert Levin, VCPH Public Health Officer, it was one of 8 reported cases in California last week and the first human case reported in Ventura County since the summer of 2007. To date in 2012, there have been 26 human cases reported in California.

A woman in her early 50's suffered mosquito bites at her East Ventura County home. Approximately 1 week later she experienced flu-like symptoms and subsequently developed WNV neuroinvasive disease. She was hospitalized with meningitis which the California Department of Public Health has confirmed was caused by WNV. She has since been released from the hospital and continues to recover at home.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through mosquito bites. The mosquitos become infected by feeding on infected birds. The risk of serious illness to most people is low with less than 1 percent of those infected developing serious neurologic illnesses such as encephalitis or meningitis. Individuals 50 or older, or those with diabetes and/or hypertension have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms.

According to VCPH, the most effective way for individuals to prevent exposure to mosquito bites and WNV is to remember the "Three D's":

1. **DEFEND** – To keep mosquitos from biting, use an EPA-registered insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 listed on the label. DEET can be used safely on infants and children ages 2 months and older.
2. **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV bite in the early morning and evening. Use bug repellent and wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure to mosquito bites during these times. In addition, make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens that are free of tears or holes to keep mosquitos out of your home and office.
3. **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water so eliminate all sources of standing water on your property including buckets, old car tires and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish or commercial products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

Public Health officials also remind horse owners that horses need annual vaccinations to protect them from equine West Nile Virus.

For the latest information on West Nile Virus in California, go to:<http://westnile.ca.gov/>

For information about Ventura County vector and mosquito control programs, go to:<http://www.ventura.org/rma/envhealth/technical-services/vector/index.html>

For information about West Nile Virus and horses, go to:
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahss/equine/wnv/>

About the Ventura County Public Health Department

The Ventura County Public Health Department's (VCPH) mission is to empower the community to improve health; promote health and emergency preparedness; and prevent disease, injury, and disability.

VCPH is committed to protecting and promoting the health of all Ventura County residents, especially in those communities that have greater health disparities and reduced access to care.

Under the direction of Ventura County Public Health Director, Barry Fisher, VCPH employs more than 300 nurses, doctors, advocates, planners and researchers and administers a wide array of programs and services including preventive health, community nursing, emergency medical services, health education, infectious disease, epidemiology/surveillance and animal control.

For more information, call: (800) 781-4449 or go to: www.vchca.org/ph

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