



MARIN/SONOMA MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

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~ News Release ~

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1ST WEST NILE VIRUS RELATED HORSE CASE FOR 2007

(Cotati), California February 20, 2007, the Sonoma County Department of Health Services and the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District received confirmation that a horse stabled in the City of Santa Rosa has tested positive for West Nile Virus. This is the first confirmed West Nile Virus infection contracted by a horse this year in California. The horse developed symptoms on February 08, 2007 and was confirmed positive for West Nile Virus on February 16, 2007.

Signs of West Nile Virus in horses include stumbling, staggering, loss of coordination, muscle twitching, circling, and inability to stand. Birds serve as the primary reservoir for harboring the disease. Mosquitoes transmit the disease to humans and horses after feeding on infected birds. Once infected, horses do not spread the disease to other humans or horses. Horses become infected only when bitten by infected mosquitoes. **Vaccination for horses is available, effective and strongly encouraged.**

"This incident reinforces the fact that despite cooler temperatures mosquitoes are present and able to transmit West Nile. This is a strong reminder to residents of the importance of eliminating standing water around their property." said **Nizza Sequeira, Public Relations Director** for the **Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District**. "Precautions against mosquito bites are especially important for the elderly who are most likely to suffer serious complications from WNV, however all residents should take steps to reduce their

risk." The District is checking all known mosquito breeding sites and setting adult mosquito traps in the area where the horse was stabled.

The Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District along with Dr. Fred Schwartz, Marin County Public Health Officer and Dr. Leigh Hall, Sonoma County Deputy Health Officer are reminding citizens to take these protective measures:

- Avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active, between dusk and dawn.
- When engaging in outdoor activities, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and apply insect repellent according to label instructions. Products containing the active ingredient DEET or Picaridin are the most effective, while oil of lemon eucalyptus is another option.
- Screen all windows and make sure the screens are in good repair.
- Cover septic tanks and screen roof vent pipes.
- Identify and eliminate all sources of standing water around your property.
- Remove water from rain gutters, boat covers, tires, tree holes, plastic containers.
- Report dead birds.

Online reporting is preferred at <http://westnile.ca.gov>. The toll-free line to report a dead bird is 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473).

This year, one (1) horse has tested positive for West Nile in Sonoma County. The detection of WNV in horses indicates that the virus is present in Sonoma County. No human cases have been reported positive at this time in either Marin or Sonoma County. **We ask that the public remain diligent in their own mosquito control efforts by checking their yards for breeding sources since they are generally the main source for mosquitoes.**

Symptoms of WNV range from mild flu-like conditions, such as fever, headache, and nausea to a stiff neck, restlessness, stupor, delirium, and convulsions. Most cases are mild; however, fatalities can occur in extreme cases.

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