



West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus, a mosquito-borne disease common in Africa, west Asia and the Middle East, was first detected in the United States in 1999. Only certain species of mosquitoes carry the virus, and very few mosquitoes are actually infected.

Impacts to People

Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with West Nile Virus do not get sick, but some may experience mild to moderate flu-like symptoms. It is estimated that less than one percent of people infected with the virus require hospitalization. (The elderly and those with compromised immune systems are particularly susceptible.) In California, more than 400 West Nile infections in people have been reported, and there have been more than 10 West Nile Virus-related fatalities to date.



Impacts to Animals

An infected mosquito can bite any animal, but not all will become infected. Mosquitoes acquire the virus from infected wild birds, and infection has been reported in more than 225 bird species. The most severe illnesses occur



in the family of birds that includes crows, jays, ravens and magpies. The broader and long-term effects of West Nile Virus on wildlife populations and ecological systems in California are not well-understood and are being investigated.

With regard to domestic animals, most horses bitten by mosquitoes will not become sick, but those that are infected may show symptoms such as stumbling, circling, hind leg weakness, muscle tremors and an inability to stand. Dogs and cats generally do not become ill from West Nile Virus.



What You Can Do

Although the likelihood of becoming ill from being bitten by an infected mosquito is small, the following precautions can help protect you and your family:

- Be aware that mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk. Although it is worthwhile to take extra precautions during these times, mosquitoes can bite at any time of the day or night.
- Apply mosquito repellent containing the active ingredient DEET. Follow label instructions carefully (especially for use by children).
- Wear protective clothing such as loose, light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Keep doors and windows shut or tightly screened, and check sleeping areas before turning in for the night.

For more information visit www.westnile.ca.gov or contact your local Vector Control District.