



NEWS RELEASE

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BUTTE COUNTY REPORTS FIRST HUMAN DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

Butte County Public Health Department has confirmed that the death of an elderly Butte County man was due to complications of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection. This marks the first human WNV death in 2005 for Butte County. There have been five (5) WNV-related fatalities to date in California this year, from Fresno (1), Kings (1), Riverside (1), San Joaquin (1) and Butte (1) counties. As of August 12, 2005, 174 human West Nile Virus (WNV) infections have been identified throughout California.

"West Nile Virus activity is increasing rapidly in the North Valley," said Dr. Mark Lundberg, Butte County Health Officer. "We must make every effort to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites as well as eliminate mosquito breeding sources around our homes."

The Butte County fatality was an elderly man who suffered from underlying chronic disease. There have been a total of seven (7) West Nile Virus infections in Butte County so far in 2005. Five suffered from West Nile Fever, a less serious form of the disease, while one person had no symptoms. Three cases were detected by screening blood donations. Of the seven Butte County cases, five have been males, and two females, with ages ranging from teenage to elderly.

Most people who are infected with West Nile Virus will not experience any illness. Approximately 10 to 15% of infected individuals will have only mild to moderate symptoms, such

as fever, headache, and body aches. Less than 1% of individuals will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. The elderly and those with compromised immune systems are more susceptible to serious illness, which could potentially result in death. While there is a vaccine available for horses, there is no vaccine for humans as yet.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes or contracting West Nile Virus, Butte County residents are urged to take the following precautions:

- Apply insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and the first two hours after sunset.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Contact the Mosquito Abatement District if you have problems with mosquitoes or know of a potential mosquito-breeding source.
- Report any ill or dead birds. To report dead birds online, visit the California Department of Health Services web site at www.westnile.ca.gov or call 1-877-WNV-BIRD.
- Consult veterinarians to properly vaccinate horses.

For more information on West Nile Virus, visit www.westnile.ca.gov or the Butte County Public Health website at <http://www.buttecountypublichealth.org>. The public may also call the Health Department at 1-800-339-2941, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to speak with an English, Spanish or Hmong speaking staff member. To report dead birds, call toll-free: 1-877-WNV-BIRD.

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