

**COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE
COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
DISEASE CONTROL BRANCH**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORT FOR WEST NILE VIRUS**

With the identification of West Nile Virus in 3 dead birds, Susan Mackintosh, Assistant Health Officer for Riverside County is encouraging residents to take precautions against the disease.

“It is important for Riverside County residents to understand how to protect themselves from mosquitoes and West Nile virus so they can continue to enjoy outdoor activities,” Mackintosh said.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Human-to-human transmission of WNV generally does not occur. However, WNV infection was associated with blood transfusions and organ transplants in the past.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Others will have only mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. However, WNV can be severe in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune systems.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other protective clothing.

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- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

A comprehensive surveillance program to monitor for WNV in Riverside County has been established by the [Department of Environmental Health Vector Control](#), local mosquito and vector control districts and other state and local agencies. The program includes testing suspect cases in humans and horses, capturing and testing mosquitoes, testing sentinel chickens and evaluating dead birds.

The public can become part of the California's monitoring effort for WNV by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies and jays that may have been dead for less than 48 hours to a special California Department of Health Services toll-free line: 877-WNV-BIRD. Residents may also call Riverside County's Animal Services Branch at (951) 358-7387, to report dead birds. Individuals should take note of the bird's location and its condition before calling for further instructions, including assistance with identifying the type of bird found. The bird should show no signs of decomposition or maggot infestation.

The tissue of dead birds is tested for the presence of WNV. The virus was most often identified first in dead birds, especially crows, in other regions of the country. While there is no evidence that people can get the virus from handling live or dead infected birds, individuals should not attempt to catch or handle them.

Anyone who becomes ill after exposure to mosquitoes should contact their health care provider.

The Disease Control Office can be reached at (951) 358-5107, for more information on West Nile Virus.

Information about WNV is available on the WEB site established for surveillance in California:
<http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>