



Riverside County
Public Health

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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER ANNOUNCES FIRST CONFIRMED HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN THE COUNTY THIS YEAR

A 78-year-old man who has been hospitalized is the first confirmed human case of West Nile virus in Riverside County this year, said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, public health officer. The individual lives in western Riverside County.

The illness was confirmed this week and health officials are trying to determine where the patient was when he got bitten.

The virus is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Health officials emphasized that the risk of serious illness to humans is low. Most individuals who are infected with the virus will not experience any illness. Elderly individuals and those with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk for serious illness.

“While West Nile is rarely life-threatening, it can be occasionally serious,” Kaiser said. “Unlike the common cold which is easily transmitted, the West Nile virus can only be spread by mosquito bites, and there are easy steps to take to reduce your risk of getting bitten.”

Here are some ways to protect yourself:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk, and wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other protective clothing outside.
- Apply EPA-registered insect repellent that contains DEET.

- Make sure that the 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, such as old tires, buckets, flower pots and toys, that can support mosquito breeding.

There were 35 human cases reported last year in Riverside County. In 2012, there were 19 confirmed human cases in the county and there has not been a death from the illness since 2008.

A comprehensive surveillance program to monitor for the virus in Riverside County has been established by the Department of Environmental Health's Vector Control Program, 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 certain species of mosquitoes with potential for disease transmission, testing sentinel chickens and evaluating dead birds. These surveillance techniques allow the vector control agencies to focus their mosquito control efforts.

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 at:

- <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>
- <http://www.rivco-diseasecontrol.org/Services/WestNileVirus.aspx>

Dead birds can be reported on the state's website or by calling toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473).