



**For Immediate Release:**

September 3, 2010

## **First Symptomatic Case of West Nile Virus in LAC Confirmed**

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Health Officer today confirmed the first symptomatic human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in Los Angeles County for the 2010 season. The case is a teenager from the east Los Angeles County area who became symptomatic in mid-August. The individual has since recovered.

“West Nile Virus is primarily spread through mosquito bites, so I encourage everyone to protect themselves from these pests,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Get rid of pools of stagnant water around your home where mosquitoes breed and use a repellent containing DEET or another approved repellent when outdoors in mosquito-prone areas, especially around dawn or dusk.”

Mosquitoes obtain the virus by feeding on infected wild birds. As of August 30th, Public Health and the independent mosquito abatement districts throughout the county have detected WNV in 17 dead birds, 31 mosquito pools, two sentinel chickens, and one squirrel within Los Angeles County in 2010.

### **Exposure to West Nile Virus**

WNV is spread from humans through the bite of an infected mosquito; mosquitoes can become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most mosquitoes do not carry the virus and most people bitten by a mosquito have not been exposed to the virus. The virus is not spread through person-to-person contact, or directly from birds to humans.

In most cases, people who are infected with West Nile Virus never become sick, or have only very mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and a mild skin rash. Symptoms of West Nile Virus could appear within three to 12 days after infection. Fortunately, fewer than one in 150 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito become severely ill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In these rare cases, the virus can cause encephalitis and death. The elderly are most at risk for severe cases of the disease. There is no specific treatment for West Nile Virus. However, individuals with severe symptoms may be hospitalized.

### **Preventive Measures**

People can decrease their risk of infection by following these recommendations:

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.



- Repellants containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus, when used as labeled, are effective defenses against mosquitoes.
- Check your window screens for holes.
- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito-eating fish, which are often available through your local mosquito abatement district. These fish eat mosquito eggs and larvae.
- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

The Los Angeles County Public Health Department has established a toll-free information line that will provide callers with updated information on West Nile Virus within the county. Call 800-975-4448.

If a recently dead bird (less than 24 hours) is found, the public is encouraged to report this by calling 877-747- 2243. Residents who see a “green pool” or stagnant swimming pool at a home should report it to Public Health’s Environmental Health Bureau at 626-430-5200.

Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:

- Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656
- Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370
- San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466
- Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917
- Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 639-7375
- Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004
- City of Long Beach Vector Control Program: (562) 570-4132

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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