

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS WARN AGAINST MOSQUITO BITES

Stockton: Mosquitoes with the Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE) virus have been identified in the neighboring counties to San Joaquin. If a mosquito carrying the WEE virus bites a person, that individual is infected with the virus and will get sick with encephalitis. An individual infected with the virus can develop minimal symptoms of fever, headache, and discomfort. Few infected people may develop severe symptoms of encephalitis and lapse into a coma. Fatality due to this virus is not high. Many infected people may not even see a doctor and feel they have a viral illness which resolves without difficulty. Infants and elderly are the groups at greatest risk, and should seek medical attention when symptoms develop.

Public Health and Mosquito and Vector Control District officials have a number of recommendations as to how individuals could protect themselves from mosquito bites. People are encouraged to consider the following: a) ensure that their houses are well screened and there is no standing water around their house; b) decrease or minimize outdoor activities at early dawn, dusk, and night time when mosquitoes are out in highest concentrations, c) use insect repellents that contains DEET as recommended by your physician, and d) inform the Mosquito and Vector Control District by telephone at: 1-800-300-4675 of any standing pools of water for appropriate action. Landowners can help by postponing the flooding of their fields for waterfowl or agricultural purposes until mid October. If they have to flood their fields prior to mid October, the water should be left standing no longer than 72 hours to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.

Encephalitis is carried by birds and mosquitoes and transmitted to man when bitten by the mosquito Culex tarsalis. The San Joaquin County Mosquito and Vector Control District will be intensifying mosquito abatement procedures in the County to minimize the mosquito population which may carry this virus to humans. The District Encephalitis Surveillance Program has not found WEE virus in flocks of chickens used as indicators for the presence of the virus in the San Joaquin County area. These chicken flocks are regularly tested for the virus. Similar chicken flocks have tested positive in Stanislaus and Sacramento Counties this year.

With the above-average rainfall and warm spring this year there has been extremely favorable conditions for mosquitoes to breed. There are numerous bird species in the area for the mosquitoes to feed upon and thus become infected with the virus. Birds pass it to mosquitoes and mosquitoes pass it to human beings.

This information is not meant to arouse undue concern for summer activities in and about San Joaquin County. However, individuals should be aware that appropriate mosquito abatement procedures are being actively enforced by the Mosquito and Vector Control District and should be aware of appropriate mosquito protection practices.

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