



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

NUMBER:	06-68	DATE:	August 24, 2006
FOR RELEASE:	IMMEDIATE	CONTACT:	Ken August or Michelle Mussuto (916)-440-7660
http://www.dhs.ca.gov			

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY WOMAN IS SECOND TO DIE IN CALIFORNIA DUE TO WEST NILE VIRUS

SACRAMENTO – An elderly Contra Costa County woman has died from complications associated with West Nile virus (WNV), the second death due to WNV in California this year, State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton announced today. The first death, an elderly Butte County woman, was announced last week.

“While we are seeing fewer human cases so far this year, our past experience suggests that the risk of human cases of West Nile virus increases dramatically during August and September,” Horton said. “For most people, the risk of serious illness from West Nile virus is low, but this second death reminds us that Californians must be continually diligent about protecting themselves and their families from mosquito bites.”

To date in 2006, WNV activity has been detected in 49 of California’s 58 counties. A total of 88 individuals from 19 counties have become ill after exposure to WNV, including the deaths in Butte and Contra Costa counties. The state’s WNV Web site (www.westnile.ca.gov) maintains updated California statistics and valuable information on WNV activity, prevention and protection.

California has one of the most comprehensive WNV surveillance and control systems in the United States. In recognition of the key role these systems play in controlling WNV, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger included \$3 million in the 2006-2007 budget to supplement existing mosquito control and abatement efforts in high-risk areas and "hot spots." These funds were recently distributed to 61 local agencies. In the 2005-2006 budget, the Governor included \$12 million to enhance and expand mosquito control efforts statewide.

Additionally, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) has expanded its use of surveillance and detection technology to reduce the human threat of WNV. Using a sophisticated geographic mapping system, CDHS tracks detailed areas of WNV activity and alerts local agencies so they may halt the mosquito breeding process early.

While most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness, seniors, especially those with chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension, can be particularly hard hit and are more likely to die from WNV. Taking necessary precautions to prevent contracting WNV is key.

-more-

The most effective ways for individuals to prevent WNV are:

- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin or oil of lemon eucalyptus, according to label instructions.
- Ensure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.

For more information about WNV and to report all dead birds, visit www.westnile.ca.gov or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD. The Web site is updated every Tuesday and Friday after 4 p.m.