

Another West Nile death reported in Glenn County

By LARRY MITCHELL - Staff Writer

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WILLOWS -- West Nile virus caused the death of an elderly man last week, Glenn County health officials reported Monday.

The man contracted what's called West Nile fever, the milder form of the disease, said Scott Gruendl, Glenn County Health Services Agency director.

Because the man was in very poor health, with underlying chronic illnesses, the mild case of West Nile virus was enough to cause his death, Gruendl said.

The man, who lived in the northern part of the county, was hospitalized in Red Bluff.

Last week, two other people from Glenn County were reported to have had the milder form of West Nile, Gruendl said.

The latest cases bring Glenn County's total to six for this year, he said.

The Glenn County death is the seventh fatality from West Nile in California this year, he said. He added he believes there have been about 120 deaths nationwide.

This appears to be one of the worst years on record for West Nile, he said.

The virus is spread to people by the bite of certain mosquitoes.

Matt Ball, manager of the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District, said all signs indicate the virus is rampant throughout the valley right now.

Tonight, the district plans to spray pesticides to kill mosquitoes in the Biggs, East Biggs, Hamilton City, Nord, and Pacific Heights areas.

He advised people to do whatever they can to avoid mosquito bites.

In Butte County, six people have contracted West Nile so far this year, he said. Four of the cases were the severe neuroinvasive type, which affects the patient's brain. The other two were West Nile fever, which causes flu-like symptoms.

On Monday, the Butte County Public Health Department sent out a news release urging horse owners to vaccinate their horses as soon as possible against West Nile virus.

So far this year, 11 horses have contracted the disease, according to the state's West Nile web page, which is at <http://westnile.ca.gov>. Of the 11 horses, one was in Butte County and one in Glenn.

Up to four of every 10 horses infected with the virus will become ill, and of those, 30 to 40 percent will die or have to be euthanized due to the severity of their illness.

The release recommended certain measure to get rid of places mosquitoes can breed.

Among them were:

- * Eliminate stagnant or standing water by draining ponds, avoiding water overflow from troughs, and reducing run-off and pooling of irrigation water.
- * Eliminate accumulated water in buckets, wheelbarrows, flower-pot saucers, old tires and other areas in which water can collect.

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