

Butte County officials on high alert for West Nile virus

Camp Fire creating haven for mosquitoes



Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District entomologist Eric Gohre holds a trap with live mosquitoes May 5 in Paradise. Health and mosquito control officials anticipate that this summer could see a significant increase in West Nile virus cases because of increased standing water following the Camp Fire and recent rains. (Matt Bates — Enterprise-Record)

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BUTTE COUNTY — Public health officials are on high alert over a possible significant increase in West Nile virus cases this summer.

Recent rains combined with challenges left over from the Camp Fire are creating a haven for mosquitoes. Officials warn that several factors may contribute to one of the worst summers for West Nile virus cases if residents don't take precautions now.

“Right now, we are really on high alert,” said Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District Manager Matt Ball. “It only takes one bite from a mosquito.”

With the increased amount of rain, many breeding grounds and standing pools of water are still in the area which include: miscellaneous containers, rain gutters, septic tanks, debris material and

stagnant pools are still in the area. The remaining water combined with increased temperatures creates quite the “perfect storm” for mosquitoes in the area, according to Ball.

Historically speaking, the West Nile virus becomes active every June and starts winding down in the cooler autumn months around October. Although Ball said some of the water sources mosquitoes breed in will disappear as the heat returns, homeowners should always remain vigilant. Dead mosquitoes brought back to Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District for testing are seen Wednesday in Oroville. (Matt Bates — Enterprise-Record)

“We’ve seen West Nile cases as early as January,” Ball said. “So we want our public to be vigilant all year round. As long as mother nature continues to irrigate water free of charge, urban drool and man-made water sources will always be a factor and remain a problem all summer long. Drain any unneeded standing water on your property, use door and window screens and people should always be wearing (mosquito) repellent.”

Like many natural remedies to combat mosquitoes including lemon and eucalyptus oil, Ball explained that citronella candles are not an effective measure against the mosquitoes compared to DEET mosquito bug spray.

While all birds can carry the West Nile virus, it’s hosts are predominantly carried by Butte County’s corvid birds — ravens, crows, magpies, stellar jays and scrub jays. A mosquito must feed off an infected bird to contract the virus capable of transmitting to humans.