

# Fourteen human cases of West Nile virus confirmed in Butte County

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OROVILLE -- There have been 14 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus in Butte County this year, which is more than the total cases reported in 2012

"The increase in human cases is very concerning as WNV activity typically continues through October. With at least another month to go and especially with this warm weather, Butte County residents are strongly encouraged to protect themselves from mosquito bites," said Butte County Health Officer Dr. Mark Lundberg.

The majority of West Nile virus cases occurred in people who reside in lower elevations, including in and around Chico, Biggs, Gridley, Durham and Oroville.

Two cases this year involve children and one case is a person in their early 20s who was relocated to a tertiary care hospital in the Bay Area because of some deteriorating mental status.

The remaining cases are in adults predominately 50 and older. One of the cases has been hospitalized for a month and is still on life support, Lundberg said.

Seven people have died due to the virus since 2004, when West Nile virus was first identified in the county. No deaths have occurred this year, but six of the 14 confirmed cases have been hospitalized with the most severe form of the virus, neuroinvasive disease.

Close to 20 percent of people who have the virus show signs of fever and other symptoms, which often go undiagnosed and unreported, and 1 percent or less show neurological symptoms from the virus, Lundberg said in an earlier interview. Neurological cases, which show that the infection has reached the brain, are always reported because the severity causes the person to go to the hospital.

Eighty percent of people who have the infection show no symptoms and are immune to the virus, he said. It can take three to 14 days since the initial mosquito bite for symptoms to show.

Those asymptomatic individuals develop antibodies, making them immune to the infection.

"The majority of people get the infection, but have no noticeable symptoms and they get immunity from that," Lundberg said.

As of Tuesday in Butte County, 42 dead birds, 29 mosquito sample groups and 40 sentinel

chickens tested positive for West Nile virus.

"This summer, there were a lot of indicators of West Nile virus activity in the area," Lundberg said. "That proves to be true in human cases as well."

Due to the increased activity, Butte County residents are at elevated risk for the virus.

"People are still at risk until we get some cold weather and the mosquito numbers drop off," Lundberg said.

Lundberg recommends carrying repellent at all times, especially if out during dawn or dusk, and making sure mosquitoes don't enter the home.

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District urges Butte County residents to take all necessary precautions to drain any and all unneeded standing water and to report any suspected mosquito-breeding sites. To report to Butte County Vector Control, call 533-6039 or 342-7350 or report online at [www.BCMVCD.com](http://www.BCMVCD.com).