

Mosquito Season Makes its Way to Butte County

The beginning of what is expected to be a wave of heat, means the mosquitoes are not far behind.

Two years ago, Butte County saw a record number of the West Nile Virus, with 55 confirmed cases.

Last year, the number of cases decreased to less than half that.

Thursday, Matt Ball, the district manager for the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District, shared what to expect this season.

There are twenty-six different mosquito species, all ready for the summer heat.

"It starts this weekend with the heat up of the weather," said Ball.

Last year, Butte County had 21 incidents of West Nile Virus, and he's hoping for less than that in 2017.

"If we were to base it on the winter and spring we had last year with this year, it's very similar and this year it was even wetter," said Ball.

But even then, 10 people were hospitalized in 2016, and Ball said West Nile is not something to mess with.

"Eight of our residents have lost their lives due to West Nile Virus," said Ball.

"On a day to day basis throughout the summer, folks go out on hikes, they go outside, they get bitten by a mosquito. What differentiates, oh this could possibly be West Nile versus, or I'm going to be fine?" said Kay Bennett, an Action News Now reporter.

"This time of year they could all be West Nile. So what we want people to do before they get that bite, wear repellent," said Ball.

"Along with West Nile a lot of people are still concerned about the Zika outbreak from last year, do folks have to be concerned this season?" Bennett asked.

"Zika is a low risk in Butte County right now because we don't have the two mosquitoes that can transmit the virus," said Ball.

"What should folks look out for?" Bennett asked.

"Day-biting mosquitoes," Ball said. "So if you're out walking your pooch at lower Bidwell at two, they're going to be nailing you."

A potentially deadly insect, ready to bite at a moment's notice.

"This is where we need to change everybody's mindset that they need to protect themselves because it only takes one bite," said Ball.

An aerial surveillance program will be searching for standing water, where mosquitoes breed, all over Butte County starting on Monday.

Mosquitoes that breed in man-made containers such as pools or boat drains can carry West Nile Virus.

"People need to think that mosquitos like to swim before they do by about a month," said Ball. "So if they can help remember that, and start maintaining those pools, or if they're not going to maintain them, give us a call."

Ball said they'll give you mosquito fish for free to take care of the problem.

The Control District will also give you a free consultation on how to safely clean up your pool, or turn it into a coy or goldfish pond, if you no longer want to maintain it.

Throughout the summer you can protect yourself from potentially getting West Nile Virus by wearing repellent, wearing long-sleeved clothing during dawn and dusk, and checking your property for standing water.