

# West Nile Virus now 'widespread' in the Sacramento Valley

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Butte County officials today announced that the mosquito-borne West Nile Virus is now widespread in the valley.

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District confirms that 13 residents are infected, making Butte County one of the worst in the state for the virus so far this year.

It's a war we can't win.

"They're built to survive, there's fossils of mosquitoes from the ice age, there's no getting rid of them. There's eggs that'll last up to fifty years, maybe more," said Doug Weseman, of the control district.

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District says 13 human cases of the virus have been reported. They've also found 43 infected mosquito pools, 33 infected chickens and 15 dead birds so far.

But, we can defend ourselves.

"The best thing is DEET or there are natural alternatives, oil or lemon eucalyptus," he said.

"The Culex species which transmit the West Nile virus, they've already peaked, they peaked in July, they're on the way down. You say, well how come I'm still getting bit by mosquitoes? Well, those are anopheles mosquitoes," he said.

There's no need for quarantine or any sort of stigma for those who do have it.

"Humans are a dead end host. If you have West Nile Virus another mosquito can't bite you and give it to someone else," he said.

Dogs and cats can get the virus, but they rarely show symptoms, and they're not contagious either. Birds are the only animals that transmit West Nile to humans through mosquito bites.

While some local residents are concerned, others say they know what to do from keeping from happening to them.

"I think about it all the time," said Oroville resident Eric Miller. "In the evening when I go out I usually spray or wear long sleeves and stuff. The dragon flies have been real helpful this year!"

"I'm not worried about it, we haven't had any issues around it at all," said Chico resident Sandy Acebo.

Some residents say they won't live in fear.

"Who wants to miss the sunset? No I don't miss anything like that,"

A great attitude but possibly a gamble.

"The best thing to do is to stay inside during dusk and dawn because that's when mosquitoes are active, they're looking for a blood meal. If you're inside, your screens are good, you probably have a good chance of not getting bit," Wesemen said.

If you're worried about mosquitos in and around you home, one way to tell the Culex species apart is its smaller in size than the typically harmless anopheles, it's a lighter tan in color and doesn't move as rapidly.