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WEST NILE VIRUS INFECTIONS ON THE RISE

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BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Butte County Public Health Department urges the public to take precautions against West Nile Virus (WNV). In recent days, three new cases of WNV have been reported to Butte County Public Health Department. Two of the three cases are neuroinvasive disease, which is the most severe form of WNV infection. These new reports bring this year's total to four identified WNV cases. Cases to date have been in people residing in Chico, Oroville or southern Butte County areas, but the risk is likely high throughout the county. The newest cases have occurred in middle-aged individuals.

"In Butte County, there has been virus detected in mosquitoes and birds, which is a significant indication that there is high risk for WNV infection to humans," said Dr. Mark Lundberg, Health Officer for Butte County. WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. "This is the time of year when WNV poses its greatest health threat. People need to take extra steps now, including use of repellent, to protect themselves from mosquito bites and WNV infection."

As of August 28, 2012, WNV activity has been detected in 34 of California's 58 counties. Fifteen counties in the state have reported human cases of WNV infection. Currently in Butte County, numerous birds and mosquito pools are testing positive for WNV.

As the public plans for Labor Day activities, it is important to include WNV prevention. Take the following steps now and throughout WNV season:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- While outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts whenever possible.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET, Oil of Lemon eucalyptus, Picaridin or IR3535 according to instructions.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact the local mosquito or vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

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Additional precautions can be taken to stop the spread of WNV, which include reporting “green” standing water, such as ponds, or neglected swimming pools to the local Mosquito and Vector Control District at (530) 342-7350 or (530) 533-6038, and reporting dead birds and squirrels thought to be infected by calling 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473) or visiting www.westnile.ca.gov.

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Butte County Public Health Department

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.