



MARIN/SONOMA MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

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~ News Release ~

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL TO TEST POSITIVE IN MARIN COUNTY

(Cotati), California August 17th, 2006 the presence of West Nile Virus (WNV) has been detected in Marin County. WNV is a viral disease of birds that can be transmitted to humans by a mosquito that has fed on an infected bird.

The District's first Western Gray Squirrel has tested positive for WNV in the Marin County by the **Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District** in cooperation with the California State Health Department. This is the first confirmed West Nile Virus infection contracted by a Western Gray Squirrel this year in Marin County and the fourth in California. Tree squirrels with West Nile virus may display neurological signs such as uncoordinated movement, paralysis, shaking, or circling. It should not be assumed that every squirrel with neurological signs has West Nile virus, as there are other factors that cause these symptoms. Do not handle a sick squirrel as they are wild animals and may bite.

This year, 6 birds have tested positive for West Nile Virus in Marin and Sonoma Counties (4 in Sonoma and 2 in Marin) and 1 Western Gray Squirrel in Marin County. The detection of WNV in wild birds indicates the virus is present in both counties. No human cases have been reported positive at this time in either Marin or Sonoma County. The District is checking all known

mosquito breeding sites and setting adult mosquito traps in the areas where the bird has been found. **We ask that the public remain diligent in their own mosquito control efforts by checking their yards for breeding sources since they are generally the main source for mosquitoes.**

Symptoms of WNV range from mild flu-like conditions, such as fever, headache, and nausea to a stiff neck, restlessness, stupor, delirium, and convulsions. Most cases are mild; however, fatalities can occur in extreme cases.

- Avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active, between dusk and dawn.
- When engaging in outdoor activities, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and apply insect repellent according to label instructions. Products containing the active ingredient DEET or Picaridin are the most effective, while oil of lemon eucalyptus is another option.
- Screen all windows and make sure the screens are in good repair.
- Cover septic tanks and screen roof vent pipes.
- Identify and eliminate all sources of standing water around your property.
- Remove water from rain gutters, boat covers, tires, tree holes, plastic containers.
- Report dead crows, ravens, magpies, jays and raptors that have been dead for less than 24 hrs.

Online reporting is preferred at <http://westnile.ca.gov/deadbird.cfm> .The toll-free line to report dead birds is 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473).