

Help “Fight the Bite”



The Santa Clara County Vector Control District received confirmation today, July 21, 2004, that a dead bird found in San José tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first confirmation of the presence of WNV in Santa Clara County. There have been no human cases or mosquitoes found with the virus in Santa Clara County or surrounding counties to date.

Having killed 600 persons nationally and sickened another 10,000 over the last five years, it is considered the fastest-moving vector-borne disease the U.S. has ever seen. “Vectors” transmit pathogens from one host to another, in this case mosquitoes that carry the virus from bird to bird, bird to human, and bird to animals (primarily horses).

While there is no human vaccine or treatment, each City employee can play a major role in helping prevent the virus from gaining a stronghold in San José through these actions:

- ✓ **Target the Source:** As you go about normal routines at work or home, urge property owners and managers to drain or treat stagnant water sources – including such seemingly innocent mosquito breeding areas as birdbaths. Even small sources must be drained, changed, or treated weekly. If no one is available onsite to speak with, employees should report stagnant water or mosquito activity to County Vector Control at 792-5010.
- ✓ **Report Dead Birds:** Birds are highly susceptible to the virus and helped spread it coast to coast in just three years (1999 to 2001). If you see recently dead birds -- particularly crows, blackbirds, and raptors such as hawks and owls – report them immediately to the State at 1 (877) WNV-BIRD (968-2473). Do not touch the birds; they will be collected for testing when appropriate.
- ✓ **Fight the Bite:** To avoid being bitten, wear protective clothing with long sleeves – particularly at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Consider spraying clothing with insect repellent containing DEET, which has proven safe and effective even for children according to the Centers for Disease Control.
- ✓ **Help Educate the Public:** When speaking with residents or neighbors, help the City speak with one voice on this important public health issue:

“Even a cup of stagnant water can breed thousands of mosquitoes. Help protect yourself and your neighbors by draining standing water. To avoid being bitten, wear protective clothing and use an insect repellent containing DEET, particularly at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.”

