



NEWS RELEASE

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HORSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

-First Horse of 2006 Succumbs to West Nile Virus-

CONCORD, CALIFORNIA - - Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District officials learned today that a horse from East Contra Costa County has tested positive for West Nile virus. Confirmatory testing was conducted by the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory at University of California, Davis. The horse began showing symptoms in late September of this year and had to be euthanized.

“We strongly urge every horse owner to vaccinate their horses,” said Deborah Bass, public affairs manager for the District. “Forty-four percent of the horses that are diagnosed with West Nile virus in California die or have to be euthanized.”

Clinical signs of West Nile virus infection in horses include stumbling, staggering, wobbly gait, loss of coordination, weakness and paralysis. Humans and animals cannot get West Nile virus from an infected horse; it is only spread by the bite of an infected mosquito.

It is not known at this time whether the horse was vaccinated. Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector control officials are nonetheless reminding residents that West Nile virus is here to stay.

“Warm weather is still upon us,” said Deborah Bass, public affairs manager for the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District. “And we all know that warmer weather can lead to more mosquitoes.”

Bass also states that mosquito and vector control technicians are finding higher numbers of mosquitoes in East county where flooding has taken place for waterfowl hunting. Mosquito and vector control technicians are continuing to monitor and control these areas for mosquitoes.

To date in Contra Costa County there have been eight human cases (two deaths), 86 dead birds, 24 chickens, 20 mosquito samples*, one horse, and 19 squirrels that have tested positive for West Nile virus. Last year in Contra Costa County there were 11 human cases, 94 dead birds, 18 chickens, four mosquito samples*, ten horses, and 25 squirrels that tested positive for West Nile virus.

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In California this year, there have been 257 human cases (5 deaths), 1298 dead birds, 609 chickens, 821 mosquito samples, 42 horses, and 32 squirrels that have tested positive for the virus.

Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District is located at 155 Mason Circle in Concord. Call the District to report mosquito problems at (925) 685-9301, or visit their office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to get FREE mosquitofish for ornamental ponds or horse troughs.

To report dead birds or to learn of your local mosquito control district, call the California Department of Health Services at 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473) or visit www.westnile.ca.gov. THIS SITE ALSO LISTS WEST NILE VIRUS CASE COUNTS BY COUNTY.

For information concerning West Nile virus symptoms, prevention, or testing, please call the Contra Costa Health Services department at (888) 959-9911 or visit their website at www.ccpublichealth.org

For information concerning West Nile virus and horses, please visit the California Department of Food and Agriculture Animal Health Branch at www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/ah/wnv_info.htm or call them at (916) 654-1447.

* Mosquito samples: Mosquitoes are trapped, collected from the field, and then the females are pooled together by species. Each pool contains one to 50 mosquitoes. Each sample is tested for the presence of St. Louis encephalitis, Western Equine encephalomyelitis and West Nile viruses.