JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OFFICIALS REPORT NEW WEST NILE VIRUS INFECTIONS

The first case of West Nile virus confirmed in a horse and a new human case with West Nile Neuroinvasive Disease

STOCKTON, CA (August 3, 2012). —San Joaquin County now has its first confirmed case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in a horse for 2012. The horse is from Manteca and was not vaccinated against the virus. The new human case is that of a woman in her early 70’s residing in the South County area. The woman was hospitalized with the neuroinvasive form of the disease and has since been released.

West Nile virus is most commonly transmitted to humans and animals the same way, through the bite of a mosquito harboring the virus. “These local cases of West Nile virus infection serve as a reminder to our residents that: West Nile virus is circulating among us; it is a serious disease; and people should take all precautions to protect themselves, their families and their animals from mosquito bites,” said Dr. Karen Furst, Health Officer of San Joaquin County.

Although there is no vaccine yet for humans, there is for horses. Agricultural Commissioner Scott Hudson recommends, “Horse owners should vaccinate their horses against the disease. This is a very effective vaccine and can help prevent illness and death in horses from West Nile Virus.” Once vaccinations occur, horse owners should check regularly with their veterinarians to make sure they stay current.

For both humans and animals, the disease can be prevented by managing mosquitoes, which carry west Nile virus.

PREVENT EXPOSURE TO MOSQUITO BITES AND WEST NILE VIRUS BY:

1. DRAINING STANDING WATER ON YOUR PROPERTY – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, wheelbarrows, rain gutters and pet bowls. Clean horse watering containers weekly. Schedule irrigation to minimize standing water. Neglected swimming pools are also prime habitat for mosquito development. Keep ponds aerated and stocked with fish that will eat mosquito larvae or use commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

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2. **UTILIZING SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES AT DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV tend to bite in the early morning and evening so it is important to stay inside with your pets and stable horses at these times. When outside, individuals should wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure to mosquito bites (i.e., long pants and long-sleeved shirts). Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions to keep mosquitoes from biting you. Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/repellentupdates.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/repellentupdates.htm). Horse owners should utilize fans, barrier cloth, fliesheets, repellents, and insecticide misting systems as adjunctive methods of control.

**WEST NILE VIRUS INFECTION FACTS:**

- **HUMANS** - Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. The risk of serious illness to most people is low. About one in five people infected with WNV will develop West Nile Fever with symptoms of headache, fever and fatigue. However, some individuals -- less than 1 percent -- will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. Individuals 50 years of age and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop serious symptoms when infected with WNV. Recent data also indicate that those with diabetes and/or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

- **HORSES** - Not every horse exposed to West Nile Virus (WNV) will develop clinical signs of the disease. Of those that do, signs include stumbling, staggering, wobbly gait, or incoordination, fever, hind limb weakness, inability to stand, muscle twitching, lethargy, or seizure. Horses do not spread the virus to other horses or humans.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

- For more information about West Nile Virus, visit San Joaquin County Public Health Services website, [www.sjphs.org](http://www.sjphs.org) or the California Department of Public Health website, [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov). Dead birds can be reported on the state website or by calling toll-free 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473)

- Horse owners can get more information at the California Department of Food and Agriculture website, [www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov). For information on vaccinations contact your local veterinarian.

- The San Joaquin County Mosquito Vector Control District is available to help with neglected pools in the prevention of mosquito development. To request District service, call 209-982-4675, 1-800-300-4675 or visit the District website at [www.sjmosquito.org](http://www.sjmosquito.org).

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