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Warm Winter and Wet Spring Brings Early Mosquito Season and West Nile Virus to the Area
Take Precautions to Protect Against Mosquito Bites and West Nile Virus Now

(Stockton, CA – May 21, 2012) The recent finding of two dead birds that tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) is an indication that the WNV season is starting earlier than usual in San Joaquin County. “It is time to take precautions against the dangers of West Nile virus (WNV),” urges Dr. Karen Furst, San Joaquin County Health Officer. West Nile virus is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus.

Hot weather, abandoned pools, and standing water create ideal conditions for the development of mosquitoes and spread of West Nile virus. “Since there is no human vaccine for West Nile virus, the best way to prevent infection is for people to take all precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites,” says Dr. Furst.

Experts refer to the “four Ds” as the most effective ways to prevent WNV:

1. **DEET** – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing. DEET can be used safely on infants and children two months of age and older. (http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/repellentupdates.htm)

2. **DAWN AND DUSK** – Mosquitoes that carry WNV tend to bite in the early morning and evening hours, so it is important to wear repellent when outdoors. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.

3. **DRESS** – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure (i.e., long pants and long-sleeved shirts).

4. **DRAIN** – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old tires, rain gutters and bird baths. If you have a pond, use mosquitofish or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae. Neglected swimming pools are also prime habitat for mosquito development. The San Joaquin County Mosquito and Vector Control District continues to reduce mosquito populations in the area and is available to help with neglected pools and 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.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. 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. Older adults and those with compromised immune systems have the highest risk of becoming ill and developing severe complications.

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A Division of San Joaquin County Health Care Services
For more information about West Nile virus, visit San Joaquin County Public Health Services website, www.sjcphs.org or the California Department of Public Health website, www.westnile.ca.gov. Residents are encouraged to report dead birds on the state website or by calling toll-free 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473).

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