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FIRST HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS CONFIRMED IN MERCED COUNTY

MERCED, CA- The Merced County Department of Public Health has confirmed the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) this year in the city of Planada. In addition to the human case, the Merced County Mosquito Abatement District has detected WNV in (58) mosquito samples, two (2) dead birds, and one (1) horse across Merced County. Statewide, (65) human cases have been reported in California as of August 28, 2026.

West Nile Virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on birds carrying the virus. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to people and other animals through their bites.

Mild symptoms of West Nile virus can include fever, headaches, body aches, nausea, and vomiting. There is no specific treatment for WNV infection. In people with milder symptoms, fever and aches will usually go away on their own. In more severe cases, people may need to go to the hospital where they can receive supportive treatment, including intravenous fluids, help with breathing, and nursing care.

“Mosquitoes can spread West Nile virus, which may cause serious illness, including swelling of the brain. The best way to protect yourself is by applying EPA-registered insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin to both skin and clothing, especially during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active,” stressed Dr. Ignacio Santana, Merced County Health Officer.

How Residents Can Help Prevent West Nile Virus:

- **Dump and Drain:** Remove standing water around homes at least once a week. Check flowerpot saucers, buckets, birdbaths, pet bowls, and other containers that can hold water. Dispose of containers that are no longer needed.
- **Maintain Pools:** Keep swimming pools clean and maintained to prevent them from becoming green or neglected. Pools that are not in use should be properly treated or drained. The District offers free assistance with unmaintained swimming pools. Contact the District for help.
- **Manage Water in Fields:** Avoid allowing water to sit in pastures or agricultural fields for more than three (3) days to prevent large mosquito hatching events. Contact the District for pre-treatment *before* irrigating a pasture or field.
- **Defend Yourself:** Use EPA-registered repellents containing 30% DEET, 20% Picaridin, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Wear long-sleeved clothing when possible and ensure window screens are free of holes and gaps.
- **Avoid Peak Hours:** Limit outdoor activity at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes that spread WNV are most active.

The Merced County Mosquito Abatement District continues to provide regular surveillance and mosquito control efforts, including ground and aerial treatments in areas experiencing increased West Nile virus activity. These efforts help reduce mosquito populations and lower the risk of disease transmission. Treatment schedules and current disease activity are posted on the District's **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **Nextdoor**, and the District's website at **mcmosquito.org**.

Reporting Dead Birds and Mosquito Sources:

Birds play an important role in the spread of WNV. Reporting and testing dead birds helps the District identify where the virus may be active. **Report dead birds** to the California West Nile Virus Hotline at **1-877-WNV-BIRD** or online at **www.westnile.ca.gov/report**.

Residents should also report unmaintained swimming pools, areas of high mosquito activity, or other standing water sources to the Merced County Mosquito Abatement District at **mcmosquito.org** or by calling **(209) 722-1527**. Reports can be made anonymously, and all services are free.

More Information on WNV, visit:

- <https://westnile.ca.gov>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/WestNileVirus.aspx>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/west-nile-virus/index.html>

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