

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

September 13, 2019

**First Human Case of West Nile Virus Infection in Merced County in 2019**

Merced County Department of Public Health has confirmed the first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in Merced County this year. The affected individual is expected to fully recover.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals by the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who become infected with West Nile virus do not get sick at all and the risk of serious illness to most people is low. However, approximately one percent of individuals can develop the neuro-invasive form of the illness (encephalitis or meningitis), which is more serious. Symptoms of serious infection include severe headaches, a stiff neck, disorientation or confusion. If you experience these symptoms, seek medical attention right away. Individuals more likely to develop serious illness or complications from WNV include people aged 50 years or older and those with diabetes or hypertension. At this point in time there is no cure or vaccine for West Nile Virus.

In Merced County in 2018, there were two confirmed human cases of West Nile virus infection with one case of West Nile Virus neuro-invasive disease. So far in 2019, there have been 62 confirmed human causes of WNV infection in California.

WNV infections occur during mosquito season which starts in the summer and continues through fall. The most effective way to prevent West Nile virus infection is to avoid being bitten by an infected mosquito. To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes or contracting WNV infection, the Merced County Department of Public Health recommends the following actions:

**DRAIN:** all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. Ensure that swimming pools and spas are properly maintained. Consider including Mosquitofish in ornamental ponds and fountains.

**AVOID:** outdoor activity at peak times when mosquitoes are most active - early morning and evening.

**PROTECT:** yourself by wearing long sleeve shirts and pants during peak biting times and by using insect repellent containing the active ingredient DEET.

Residents are encouraged to visit the California West Nile Virus Website at <http://westnile.ca.gov> for more information on West Nile Virus activity in California.

Residents may also contact the Merced County Mosquito Abatement District at <http://mcmosquito.org> for information regarding mosquito control.