



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION**

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**DEAD BIRD AND TREE SQUIRREL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
CALIFORNIA WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV) DEAD BIRD & TREE SQUIRREL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (CDPH)
DIVISION OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL**

Dead Bird and Tree Squirrel Reporting and Submission Instructions

Members of the public may salvage dead birds found on their property or place of residence. **The public must first call the Dead Bird Hotline at 1-877-968-BIRD (2473) and obtain a Dead Bird Number**; a corresponding public salvage submission form will then be faxed to the appropriate agency. The public will be instructed by the hotline staff to double-bag the carcasses and drop them off at the designated agency within 24 hours, between 9 am - 3 pm, Monday – Friday, and **only in areas where local agencies are not picking up dead birds** (e.g., closed zip codes), unless otherwise requested by the local agency. **Note: only dead birds may be brought in by the public to local agencies for shipping. We discourage public salvage of all squirrels because ground squirrels, which could be infected with plague, may be confused with tree squirrels.**

weblinks: [bird and tree squirrel ID chart \(pdf\)](#) [tree squirrel surveillance Q&A \(pdf\)](#)

Once the submission is approved, the local agency can ship the carcass to the California Animal Health & Food Safety Laboratory at UC Davis (CAHFS Central). CAHFS Central will then remove specific tissues and forward the samples to the UC Davis Center for Vectorborne Diseases (CVEC) for WNV testing. Shipping and testing expenses will be paid by CDPH. Carcasses are considered **Category B, Biological Substances**. This replaces the old designation, "Diagnostic Specimen". To ensure the carcass arrives at CAHFS in a testable condition, to protect your safety, and to comply with shipping regulations, please follow these instructions:

- Only dead birds and tree squirrels can be picked up under the state permit.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when handling all carcasses. If gloves are not available, use a plastic bag -- turned inside out -- over your hand and invert the bag to surround the carcass. Do not touch a carcass with bare hands.
- **Collect fresh carcasses.** Badly decomposed or scavenged carcasses are of limited diagnostic value. Signs that a bird or squirrel has been dead for too long (over 24-48 hours) are the presence of maggots, an extremely lightweight carcass, missing eyes, skin discoloration, skin or feathers that rub off easily, strong odor, or a soft, mushy carcass.
- **If the carcass is found to be unacceptable (e.g. a species the CDPH is not accepting or a badly decomposed specimen), please collect the carcass, double-bag it, and dispose of it in a secure garbage can or dumpster.** California Department of Fish & Game prefers that you burn or bury the carcass, but disposing of it in a dumpster is also acceptable. **Please call CDPH immediately and notify us that the animal will no longer be submitted.**