

## WHAT IS THE CALIFORNIA WEST NILE SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM?

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has coordinated a statewide mosquito-borne encephalitis surveillance program since 1969 to detect western equine encephalitis (WEE), St. Louis encephalitis (SLE), and other viruses. In 2000, CDPH and other agencies expanded the program to enhance the state's ability to detect WNV. Reporting and testing of dead birds and tree squirrels was added to the existing California surveillance system, which includes encephalitis case detection, mosquito testing, and monitoring of sentinel chickens.

### Human Case Surveillance

Individuals who are experiencing symptoms of WNV should contact their health care provider or clinic. The California Department of Public Health and local public health departments provide WNV testing. Health care providers should contact their local public health department to discuss testing requirements or visit [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) for more information.

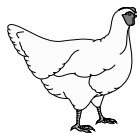
### Mosquito Testing

Mosquitoes throughout the state are collected and tested for the presence of WNV, WEE, and SLE viruses. Local mosquito and vector control agencies also monitor the abundance and type of mosquitoes.



### Sentinel Chicken Testing

Over 200 chicken flocks are strategically placed throughout the state and are tested routinely during the mosquito season to detect evidence of infection from WNV, WEE, or SLE viruses. Chickens do not get sick from these viruses.



### Animal Case Surveillance

Horses with encephalitis are routinely tested for WNV, WEE, and other mosquito transmitted diseases. Animal owners should consult a veterinarian if their animal is ill.

### Dead Bird and Dead Tree Squirrel Surveillance

California began to test dead crows and related birds for WNV in 2000 and included dead tree squirrels in 2004. Reporting dead birds and dead tree squirrels helps identify where the virus is active in California. State agencies, private organizations, and individuals participate in the surveillance program by reporting dead birds and dead tree squirrels.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SEE A DEAD BIRD or TREE SQUIRREL?

If you find a dead bird, particularly a crow, jay, magpie, raven, sparrow, finch, or raptor, or dead tree squirrel; please file an online report at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) or call toll-free 1-877-WNV-BIRD. Dead bird and dead tree squirrel reports are very important because they are usually the first indication of the virus in an area, and allow the CDPH to monitor the virus throughout the year.

If the bird or tree squirrel does not meet the criteria for testing, it will not be picked-up and can be disposed of in an outside garbage can. Do not handle the animal with your bare hands. Use a shovel, gloves, or inverted plastic bags to handle the animal, place it in a plastic bag, then dispose of it in the trash.

For More Information on West Nile Virus or to Report a Dead Bird or Dead Tree Squirrel visit:

[www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)

or call

1-877-WNV-BIRD

## WEST NILE VIRUS PREVENTION & CONTROL

To decrease exposure to mosquitoes and the infections they may carry:



Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property to reduce mosquito breeding.



Avoid spending time outside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.



Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions when you go outside.



Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.



Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, GOVERNOR  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

KIMBERLY BELSHÉ, Secretary  
Health and Human Services Agency



MARK HORTON, MD, MSPH, Director  
Department of Public Health



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# West Nile Virus In California



## THE CALIFORNIA WEST NILE VIRUS SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

For more information:  
[www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) or  
1-877-WNV-BIRD

California Department of Public Health  
Vector-Borne Disease Section  
Sacramento, CA  
(916) 552-9730  
[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

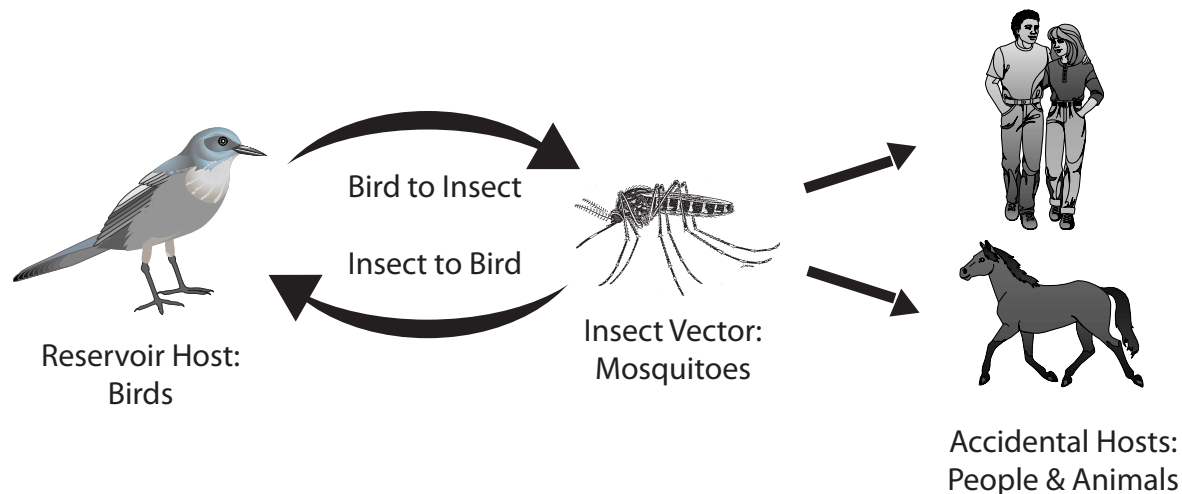
## WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus commonly found in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and, since 1999, in North America. WNV was first detected in southern California in 2003 and has since spread to all 58 counties. Current information on WNV activity in California can be found on our website at: [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov).

## HOW DO PEOPLE & ANIMALS GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus is usually transmitted to people and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito acquires the infection by feeding on a bird with virus in its blood. Some species of birds, such as crows and jays, are very susceptible to the virus and are more likely to die from infection. Horses are also very susceptible to WNV and approximately one-third of horses with clinical signs have died or been euthanized.

## TRANSMISSION CYCLE OF WEST NILE VIRUS



## WHAT IS THE RISK OF GETTING SICK FROM WEST NILE VIRUS?

**People over 50 and those with certain medical conditions have a higher chance of getting sick when infected with WNV.**

People over the age of 50, diabetics, those with high blood pressure, and the immunocompromised should take special care to avoid mosquito bites because they are more likely to develop serious symptoms if they do get sick.

**Being outside means you're at risk.**

The more time you spend outdoors, the greater chance you have to be bitten by an infected mosquito. Take precautions to avoid mosquito bites if you spend time outside, either working or playing.

**Risk of transmission through medical procedures is very low.**

All donated blood is checked for WNV before being used. The risk of getting WNV through blood transfusions and organ transplants is very small, and should not prevent people who need surgery from having it. If you have concerns, talk to your doctor.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN PEOPLE?

**Serious Symptoms in a Few People.** Less than 1 percent (about one in 150) of the people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. The severe symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis. These symptoms may last several weeks, and neurological effects may be permanent. West Nile virus infection can be fatal.

**Milder Symptoms in Some People.** Up to 20 percent (about 1 in 5) of the people who become infected will display symptoms including fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. Symptoms usually last for just a few days, although even previously healthy people have been sick for several weeks.

**No Symptoms in Most People.** Approximately 80 percent of people (about 4 out of 5) who are infected with WNV will not show any symptoms.

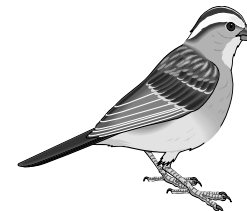
**Call your doctor or clinic if you have questions.**

## WHICH ANIMALS GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

An infected mosquito can bite any animal, but not all animals will become sick. The disease most often affects birds but may occasionally cause disease in other animals.

### Birds

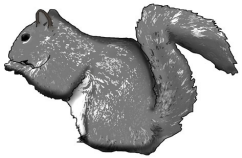
Wild birds serve as the main source of virus for mosquitoes. Infection has been reported in more than 225 bird species. Although many birds that are infected with WNV



will not appear ill, WNV infection can cause serious illness and death in some birds. The most severe illnesses are seen among the corvid birds, which include crows, jays, ravens, and magpies.

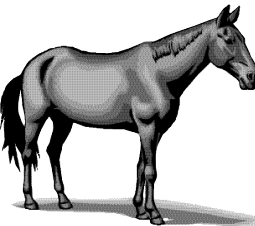
### Squirrels

Tree squirrels can contract WNV from mosquito bites. Symptoms include uncoordinated movement, paralysis, circling, lethargy, and death. Infection has been reported in western gray, eastern gray, and fox squirrels in many regions of California.



### Horses

Like people, most horses bitten by mosquitoes will not become sick with WNV. However, of those that do, clinical signs may include stumbling, circling, hind leg weakness, inability to stand, muscle tremors, and death. A vaccine to prevent WNV infection in horses is available. Horse owners should consult with a veterinarian about WNV vaccine and other vaccines against mosquito-borne diseases, such as western equine encephalitis.



### Dogs and Cats

Dogs and cats can be exposed to WNV in the same way as humans. However, these animals are very resistant to WNV and very rarely become ill. Concerned pet owners should consult with a veterinarian.

