First Human Case of West Nile Virus Reported in Santa Barbara County

Santa Barbara County has reported the first human case testing positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in the state of California this year. Santa Barbara County has not had a case of WNV in animals reported thus far this year.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Human-to-human transmission of WNV does not occur.

“Summer is the time when mosquito activity increases. It’s a good reminder for us all to take steps to avoid mosquito bites” said Dr. Peter Hasler, Medical Director of the Santa Barbara Public Health Department.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property that can support mosquito breeding.

WNV was first detected in the United States in 1999 and is now well established in most states. In 2011, West Nile Virus activity has been detected in animals in 14 of 58 California counties.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Others will have only mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. However, WNV can be severe in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune systems.

For information about WNV, visit the web site: www.westnile.ca.gov

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