



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIGHTING WEST NILE VIRUS

San Diego County Has Done Well, but Residents Need to Keep Guard Up

Since West Nile virus reached the West Coast in 2003, San Diego County has used helicopters, backpack blowers, mosquito-eating fish, public education, Internet notifications and more to protect the public.

“So far, our efforts have paid off, said County Supervisor Greg Cox, “Last year, there wasn’t a single reported human case of West Nile virus in San Diego County. But this is no time to relax. As we all know, diseases can strike anywhere, anytime if we let down our guards. We’ve just had a very wet winter, which means better breeding for the mosquitoes that can carry West Nile virus.”

Cox said the County would continue to do its part Wednesday at the County’s 2011 West Nile virus season kickoff event. Helicopters and backpacks will continue to drop and shoot larvicide into local ponds and water sources. The County will keep looking for green pools, continue to give out free mosquito-eating fish, and visit schools with West Nile virus posters and educational materials.

But the public also needs to help, County Environmental Health officials said, by remembering and acting on this phrase: “Prevent, Protect, Report.”

- **Protect Yourself from Mosquito Bites:** Protect yourself from the virus by staying inside when mosquitoes are most active, between dusk and dawn. Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors. Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of eucalyptus or IR3535 when outside. Make sure screens on windows and doors are in good condition and secured.
- **Prevent Mosquito Breeding:** by dumping out or removing any backyard item that can hold water, such as plant saucers, rain gutters, buckets, garbage cans, toys, old tires and wheelbarrows. Mosquito fish may be used to control mosquito breeding in backyard water sources such as unused swimming pools, ponds, fountains and horse troughs.
- **Report Dead Birds and Green Swimming Pools:** Please report dead crows, ravens, jays, hawks and owls, and green pools to the Vector Control Program.

County officials also said the public can sign up to receive text messages to get the latest West Nile virus updates over their cell phones. All they have to do is text the word PEST to the number 75309 from their cell phones.

For more information about West Nile virus and how to protect yourself, call 858-694-2888 or visit www.SDFightTheBite.com.

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