



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEST NILE VIRUS WEEKLY UPDATE *County's First Horse Tests Positive for West Nile Virus*

County Vector Control officials and the County Veterinarian announced today that a 30-year-old horse from Blossom Valley tested positive for West Nile virus. The horse was found on the ground having seizures and later died. Additionally, another 11 dead birds tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV) this week, bringing this year's total to one horse, one mosquito pool, and 72 birds. The 10 American Crows and one Red-Tailed Hawk were found in Oceanside, San Marcos, Vista, Valley Center, Del Mar, Sorrento Valley, Mira Mesa, Scripps Ranch and La Mesa.

"Horses are very susceptible to the virus," said County Veterinarian Dr. Nikos Gurfield.

"Unfortunately, this horse did not survive. It is extremely important that horse owners properly vaccinate their horses against this deadly disease. Approximately 30 percent of horses infected with the virus and develop symptoms will die. The California Department of Food and Agriculture recommends that horses receive booster shots every six months."

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease that can be transmitted to humans and horses by infected mosquitoes. Signs of the disease in horses include stumbling, staggering, wobbling, weakness, muscle twitching or inability to stand. Contact your veterinarian immediately if your horse has any of these symptoms.

Protect yourself and your horses from mosquito bites by eliminating mosquito breeding sites around your home. Mosquito fish can be used in horse troughs, unused swimming pools, ponds and fountains to eat mosquito larvae. Avoid going outdoors at dawn and dusk, wear long sleeves and long pants when outside, and use insect repellent containing DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus or IR 3535. Ensure that windows and screens are well-maintained to keep mosquitoes from getting inside your home.

For information on WNV, mosquito fish, or to report dead birds or mosquito breeding sites, please call County Vector Control at (888) 551-INFO (4636). You can also report dead birds on the County's West Nile virus Web site at www.SDFightTheBite.com.

*****Media availability for the County Veterinarian today at 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. and after 3 p.m.*****

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