Media Advisory

Three Birds In Almaden/Santa Teresa Area Test Positive For West Nile Virus

San Jose, April 08, 2005: The Santa Clara County Vector Control District (the District) received confirmation that three birds found in Santa Clara County (the County) have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This brings the number of WNV positive birds in the County to five this year.

The first bird, a quail, was found on March 15 in the area of Almaden Expressway and Meridian Ave. The second bird, a Lesser Goldfinch, was found on March 17 in the area near Blossom Hill and Santa Teresa. The third bird, a blackbird, was found on March 25 in the area of Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill.

“Although these are not the first WNV positive birds to be found in the County this year,” said Kriss Costa, Community Educational Specialist for the District, “the find is significant in that the birds were all found within ten days and a five mile radius of each other. This is an area that was considered a “hot spot” last year. Eighteen of the 46 positive birds found in the County were from the same general area.”

Experts are predicting Northern California to be the epicenter of the WNV this year. This virus is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito and cannot be spread from person to person.

“The unusually high amount of rains and warm temperatures this year have made for a great mosquito season,” said District Manager Tim Mulligan. “Because of this find, we have stepped up our surveillance and outreach program. Our field technicians have been working hard to keep the mosquitoes under control, but we really need the public’s help in this fight. Our greatest challenge is getting people to check around their homes, apartments or work locations for mosquito-breeding sources such as swimming pools, ponds, buckets, barrels, leaking sprinkler systems, dripping hoses, anything that can produce a puddle of standing water.”

Residents can reduce their risk of being bitten by mosquitoes by taking the following precautions:
-Drain all sources of standing water where mosquitoes might breed
-Dusk and dawn are when mosquitoes are most likely to bite. Try to limit outdoor activities during these times.
-Dress in light colored, long sleeved shirts and pants if outdoors at dusk and dawn or when mosquitoes are biting.
-DEET keeps mosquitoes from biting you. Use insect repellents containing DEET when outdoors when mosquitoes are likely to bite. Follow the directions carefully.
- Daily running of swimming pool and hot tub filters is important since they may be a major source of mosquito.
- Dead birds should be reported to 877-WNV-BIRD (877)9968-2473
- Make sure all window and door screens are tight and in good repair.

The Vector Control District, established in 1988 to control mosquitoes in public waterways, also provides information and assistance on other vectors including rats, ticks, yellow jackets, head lice and wildlife. The District can be contacted at 408-792-5010 or 800-675-1155.

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