



Riverside County Public Health

Susan Harrington, M.S., R.D., Director
Dr. Cameron Kaiser, M.D., Public Health Officer

Contact:

Jose Arballo Jr, Sr. Public Information Specialist
Department of Public Health
Office: 951.358.5599 Cell: 951.712.3705
Email: jarballo@rivcocha.org

First two West Nile Virus cases for 2015 reported in Riverside County

A 37-year-old man and 53-year-old woman are the first confirmed human cases of West Nile Virus in Riverside County this year, said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, public health officer. The individuals live in western Riverside County.

The illness was confirmed this week based on test results and other clinical information. Both patients were hospitalized, but are expected to recover.

The virus is transmitted to humans and animals through a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Health officials emphasized that the risk of serious illness to humans is low. Most individuals who are infected with the virus will not experience any illness. Elderly individuals and those with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk for serious illness.

“While West Nile is rarely life-threatening, it can be occasionally serious,” Kaiser said. “Unlike the common cold which is easily transmitted, the West Nile virus can only be spread by mosquito bites, and there are easy steps to take to reduce your risk of getting bitten.”

Here are some ways to protect yourself:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk, and wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other protective clothing outside.
- Apply EPA-registered insect repellent that contains DEET.
- Make sure 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, such as old tires, buckets, flower pots and toys that can support mosquito breeding.

There were 15 human cases reported last year in Riverside County. In 2013, there were 35 confirmed human cases in the county and there has not been a death from the illness since 2008.

A comprehensive surveillance program to monitor the virus in Riverside County has been established by the Department of Environmental Health's Vector Control Program, local mosquito and vector control districts and other state and local agencies.

The Department of Public Health, in cooperation with its vector control district partners, is also unveiling a new public information tool to help county residents understand where West Nile virus has been detected and how mosquitoes that carry it are controlled. Visitors can view a map of where cases have been reported, where the virus has been found, and where mosquito control operations, such as spraying are occurring. The site is updated weekly during the West Nile peak season and additional information from vector control agencies will be added as it is received. The map can be found at <http://www.rivcoph.org/Home/WestNileMap.aspx>

"We hope that this tool will help people understand how West Nile affects Riverside County residents and how the vector districts protect them," Kaiser said. "This will be the first of many ways we'll be using technology to improve the public's understanding of health issues."

Anyone who becomes ill after exposure to mosquitoes should contact their health care provider. The Disease Control office can be reached at 951.358.5107 for more information on West Nile Virus.