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Take Precautions to Protect Against Mosquito Bites and West Nile Virus

(Stockton, CA – July 8, 2011) “It is time to take precautions against the dangers of West Nile Virus (WNV),” urges Dr. Karen Furst, San Joaquin County Health Officer. West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of a mosquito harboring the virus. Although there are no reported cases of West Nile Virus yet this year in San Joaquin County, the California Department of Public Health reports West Nile Virus activity has been increasing throughout the state.

Hot weather, abandoned pools, and standing water from recent rain left in irrigation ditches and open outdoor containers create ideal conditions for the development of mosquitoes and spread of West Nile Virus. “People should take all precautions to protect themselves from mosquito bites,” says Dr. Furst.

Experts refer to the “four Ds” as the most effective ways to prevent WNV:

1. DEET – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Apply repellents only to exposed skin and/or clothing. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/repellentupdates.htm>)
2. DAWN AND DUSK – Mosquitoes that carry WNV tend to bite in the early morning and evening hours, so it is important to wear repellent when outdoors. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes. Repair or replace screens with tears or holes.
3. DRESS – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure (i.e., long pants and long-sleeved shirts).
4. DRAIN – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flower pots, old tires, rain gutters and bird baths. If you have a pond, use mosquitofish or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae. Neglected swimming pools are also prime habitat for mosquito development. The San Joaquin County Mosquito Vector Control District is available to help with neglected pools in the prevention of mosquito development. To request District service, call 209-982-4675, 1-800-300-4675 or visit the District website at www.simosquito.org.

Most individuals who are infected with WNV will not experience any illness. About one in five people infected with WNV will develop West Nile Fever with symptoms of headache, fever and fatigue. However, some individuals -- less than 1 percent -- will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis.

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For more information about West Nile Virus, visit San Joaquin County Public Health Services website, www.sjcphs.org or the California Department of Public Health website, www.westnile.ca.gov. Dead birds can be reported on the state website or by calling toll-free 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473).

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