

WEST NILE VIRUS IN CALIFORNIA

The hallmark of the year 2003 was the West Nile virus. The District staff had very active year, conducting prevention, surveillance, and control activities relative to existing and emerging vector-borne disease in the Coachella Valley. Successful cooperative efforts between our agency and the California Department of Health Services, Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California, University of California Davis, and local Health Departments, improved mosquito and arbovirus surveillance and control operations and thereby helped reduce the risk of arboviral infection in the residents of the Coachella Valley.

The Coachella Valley District was one of the leaders in California to be prepared for the impending invasion of WN virus. From May 2001, the District has had the *Mosquito-Borne Virus Surveillance and Emergency Response Plan* and in April 2003, the *Guidelines for Surveillance, Prevention, and Control of West Nile Virus – Action Plan* for Coachella Valley was created to insure appropriate and timely response and effective mosquito control. The District initiated and led other agencies in southern California that included other vector control districts, DHS, County of Riverside Health Department, Office of Agricultural Commissioner, and local Emergency Operational Center in creation of Riverside County West Nile Task Force.

In late July, West Nile virus was present in Imperial County, and in mid August the first detection of the WN virus in chickens from the Coachella Valley, south of Mecca was confirmed.

The year 2003 season came to the end with 10 positive mosquito pools and 16 chickens seroconverted for WN virus in the Coachella Valley. There was no human case of WN virus detected in the Coachella Valley, and only two cases from California – one from Riverside and one from Imperial County.

The District staff is already planning for the upcoming year, and it is thankful for the Board support as we all make every effort to promote and provide protection from vector-borne diseases to the residents of the Coachella Valley.

Respectfully,

Branka B. Lothrop, PhD
Vector Ecologist