PRESS RELEASE

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FIRST WEST NILE VIRUS HUMAN CASE IN THE VALLEY THIS YEAR
Residents urged to dump and drain after the rain to prevent mosquito breeding sources

INDIO, CA, SEPTEMBER 14, 2017: The Riverside County Department of Public Health confirmed that a La Quinta resident tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This is the Coachella Valley’s first human case of WNV infection this year. For further information regarding human cases, please contact the Riverside County Department of Public Health at (951) 358-5107.

In response, the Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District will be in La Quinta to set additional traps, increase larval surveillance to identify mosquito breeding sources, and carry out larval and adult control as necessary in an effort to reduce the number of mosquitoes and protect public health. Residents are urged to assist in reducing mosquito populations particularly after the recent rains. While those rains brought cooler temperatures to the Coachella Valley, the water left behind provides havens for potentially virus-spreading mosquitoes.

Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District officials advise Valley residents to check their yards for any containers or other items that may have collected water, including any depressions in the ground. Since mosquitoes can complete their life cycles from egg to adult in about a week, containers or other areas that hold water should be dumped or drained immediately. Common sources that may collect water and contribute to mosquito breeding include plant saucers, buckets, tires, pet water bowls, recycle bins, trash cans, and even trash hidden in nearby bushes.

“Don’t let mosquitoes take over your yard,” said Jeremy Wittie, MS, Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District General Manager (CVMVCD). “The effort you put in now to get rid of standing water in your yard will protect you and your family’s health when outside enjoying our cooler temperatures.”

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While residents do their part to tackle the standing water around their homes, vector control technicians are in the field searching for new standing water sources created by the rain and controlling mosquito populations throughout the Coachella Valley. Reducing mosquito populations is even more important this year as mosquito-borne virus activity is the highest on record in the Coachella Valley at this point in the year. There have been 134 samples of mosquitoes that have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV), Saint Louis encephalitis virus (SLE), or for both viruses in 2017. The second highest number of positive samples in the Coachella Valley was 119 during the same period in 2015.

Most of the samples of mosquitoes that tested positive were collected in Mecca, Thermal, and the North Shore area of the Salton Sea. Disease notification signs have been placed in the area to alert the public, and prevention and protection materials have been distributed to clinics, markets, schools, and community centers in the area. In response to the increased virus activity and in an effort to reduce the number of mosquitoes and interrupt elevated virus transmission, the District has been searching for and treating standing water sources, increased trapping, and carried out aerial adult control applications in the East Valley on September 11 and 12. Future applications will be scheduled as necessary to protect public health. Route maps and additional information about the applications are available at www.cvmvcd.org/controlactivities.htm.

The District is also continuing its aerial larval control campaign against the invasive Aedes mosquito in Palm Springs, the city which has seen the largest infestation so far in the Valley of Aedes aegypti. Helicopter applications targeting mosquito larvae have been underway in Palm Springs since the end of July and will continue for three more Saturdays, 5-7 a.m., weather permitting, on September 16, 23, and 30. The application zone is in between East Sunny Dunes, South Sunrise Way, East Via Carisma, and the mountains.

Aedes aegypti was first detected in the Coachella Valley in the City of Coachella in May 2016 and has since been detected in Indio, Cathedral City, Palm Springs, and La Quinta. After months of intensive surveillance and control strategies in Coachella, Indio, and Cathedral City, new detections of the invasive mosquito in those areas have dropped substantially.

**How residents can help reduce mosquitoes:**

- **Drain Standing Water.** Mosquitoes lay eggs in and near standing water. Limit the number of places for mosquitoes to breed by draining/discard items that hold water, such as old tires, buckets, and empty flower pots. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty water from saucers under pots and water-holding plants such as bromeliads, and regularly change the water in root plant cuttings (both indoors and outdoors). Change water and scrub wading pools, birdbaths, and pet bowls at least weekly.

- **Install or Repair Screens.** Keep mosquitoes out with tight-fitting screens on all windows and doors.

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How residents can protect themselves from mosquito bites:

- **Apply Insect Repellent.** Use a repellent with DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Lemon eucalyptus oil should not be used on children under three years of age.

- **Be Aware of the Peak Hours for Virus-Transmitting Mosquitoes.** Dawn and dusk are peak biting times for mosquitoes that can transmit WNV and SLE. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities during that time. Also, be aware of day-time biting mosquitoes and report them to the District.

- **Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites.** Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from skin.

Please contact the District at (760) 342-8287 to report mosquito problems, neglected pools, standing water where mosquitoes breed, and to request mosquitofish. Please report dead birds to the West Nile Virus Hotline at (877) 968-2473. If you are sick with fever, headache, and joint or muscle pain, contact your health provider. Visit us online at [www.cvmvcd.org](http://www.cvmvcd.org) to obtain more information and submit service requests. For information on mosquito-borne disease transmission to humans in Riverside County, go to [www.rivco-diseasecontrol.org](http://www.rivco-diseasecontrol.org). For the latest statewide statistics for WNV activity, please visit [http://westnile.ca.gov](http://westnile.ca.gov). For information on mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases, go to [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/MosquitoesandMosquitoBorneDiseases.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/MosquitoesandMosquitoBorneDiseases.aspx).

**Background on WNV and SLE**

WNV and SLE are transmitted to humans via the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes are infected when they feed on birds carrying the virus. Most individuals infected with WNV and SLE will not experience any illness. Others will have flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. In severe cases, people will need to be hospitalized, and in rare cases the disease can be fatal. Severe illness can occur in people of any age, however, people over 60 years of age and individuals with other health issues and lowered immune systems are at greater risk of experiencing severe symptoms when infected. Anyone with symptoms should contact their health care provider.

**Background on Aedes aegypti**

Invasive Aedes mosquitoes are small (about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch), black and white, and feed almost exclusively on humans, biting aggressively all day. The public plays a critical role in helping to control the spread of this mosquito species, which is a backyard breeder. This mosquito is a public health threat as it is capable of transmitting serious viruses such as chikungunya, dengue, yellow fever, and Zika. While these viruses are not currently transmitted locally, the District is taking steps to eliminate and reduce the spread of this mosquito throughout the Coachella Valley before it becomes established and local transmission of life threatening viruses occurs.

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