



Merced County Mosquito Abatement District
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FIRST DETECTION OF ST. LOUIS ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS IN MERCED COUNTY

MERCED, CA– The Merced County Mosquito Abatement District received confirmation that one sentinel chicken from Merced County tested positive for St. Louis Encephalitis Virus (SLEV). SLEV is related to West Nile Virus (WNV) and is transmitted via the bite of Culex mosquitoes, the same mosquitoes that transmit WNV.

Like WNV, most people who become infected with SLEV will never feel sick. People who do feel sick may have mild flu-like symptoms; a small number of people will exhibit symptoms that include: headache, confusion, disorientation, and dizziness. Seizures, paralysis, coma, and sometimes death may occur. People who are older and those with weakened immune systems are more likely to develop the severe symptoms. There is no specific treatment for SLEV.

"The sentinel chicken sample that tested positive for SLEV is the first detection of the virus in Merced County in over 40 years", according to General Manager Rhiannon Jones of Merced County Mosquito Abatement District. "People need to continue to take precautions by protecting themselves and their families from mosquito bites."

To date, California has 30 mosquito samples that have tested positive for SLEV within eight counties this year. The sentinel chicken that tested positive for SLEV in Merced County, is the first sentinel chicken to test positive in the state. During 2016 there were three human SLEV cases in California. These were the first cases in California since 1997.

In addition to the sentinel chicken that tested positive for SLEV, a total of 20 mosquito samples, five sentinel chickens, and one dead bird have tested positive for WNV this year in Merced County. The District anticipates more SLEV and WNV detections in the coming months and would like to remind residents they can help by taking the following precautions:

- **Drain** standing water. Mosquitoes prefer to lay eggs in stagnant water.
- **Defend** yourself against mosquitoes using repellents containing DEET, Picaridin, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus.
- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are present, typically **Dawn** and **Dusk**.
- **Report neglected swimming pools** to the District. *Anonymous calls accepted.*

To report mosquito-breeding problem areas and request service, Merced County residents should contact Merced County Mosquito Abatement District at (209) 722-1527 [main], (800) 622-3242 [toll], or www.mcmosquito.org.

For more information regarding WNV visit:

- <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>

For more information regarding SLEV visit:

- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/SLE.aspx> or <https://www.cdc.gov/sle/>

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