

Taking precautions against West Nile virus

To the community,

Spring has El Dorado County residents thinking about gardens, hiking and the great outdoors. It is also time to think about preventing West Nile virus infection. As the weather warms, the El Dorado County Environmental Management and Health Services departments would like to remind residents to take precautions to prevent West Nile Virus.

“Prevention strategies include draining all sources of standing water and reporting dead birds and tree squirrels to the State West Nile virus hot line,” said Virginia Huber, division manager said.

April 26-30 is West Nile Virus and Mosquito and Vector Control Awareness Week.

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. As of April 13, there have been no reported cases of human infection with West Nile virus in California this year.

However, throughout the state, five birds have tested positive for West Nile virus, including one bird in Sacramento County. Since March of this year, four birds and one tree squirrel from El Dorado County have been sent in for testing for West Nile virus.

Health officials recommend horse owners contact their veterinarians about vaccinations for their horses, as horses are very susceptible to West Nile virus.

Local health and environmental officials continue to monitor West Nile virus activity and conduct surveillance and control

activities throughout the county. Physicians routinely test for West Nile virus infection in persons with meningitis or encephalitis. The El Dorado County Environmental Management Department operates a mosquito abatement program that includes: treating standing water sources to kill mosquito larvae, mosquito trapping, canvassing communities and providing door-to-door education.

Huber recommends the following tips to prevent West Nile virus:

- * Drain. Empty all sources of standing water around property to reduce mosquito breeding. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas; and keep them empty or covered when not in use.

- * DEET. Use an insect repellent containing DEET, Picardin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or other approved substance on exposed skin when outdoors.

- * Dusk and Dawn. Take extra precautions during these times of day, as mosquitoes are most active.

- * Dress. When outdoors during peak mosquito hours or in areas where mosquitoes are active, wear long sleeves and long pants.

- * Report dead birds and tree squirrels to the State hotline at 877.968.2473.

- * Report green or abandoned swimming pools to Environmental Management at (530) 573.3450 in Tahoe or (530) 621.5300 in Placerville.

For more information about WNV, visit: www.edcgov.us/emd or www.westnile.ca.gov. Information is also available on the El Dorado County West Nile Virus hot lines – (530) 573.3405 or (530) 642.4968.

El Dorado County Environmental Management