



Oct. 1, 2014

Riverside County

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## Door-to-door visits in Murrieta helping to raise awareness about West Nile virus

Riverside County health officials, in conjunction with city staff, went door-to-door in several Murrieta neighborhoods starting today to give residents information about protecting themselves from mosquito-borne illnesses like West Nile virus.

The action comes after mosquitos collected in the area near The Colony neighborhood tested positive for West Nile. Health officials also recently confirmed the county's fifth human case of West Nile after a man from southwest Riverside County became ill. The patient has recovered.

"Getting face-to-face contact with residents helps us make sure they get information about protecting themselves," said Dottie Merki, program chief for the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health. "These steps are simple but they can go a long way toward raising awareness and protecting people."

The department's vector-control staff has intensified mosquito surveillance, as well efforts to control adult and larval mosquitos in the area, to reduce mosquito populations and interrupt the disease-transmission cycle. Residents are encouraged to take an active role in reducing the West Nile virus threat in their neighborhoods. County and city officials are working together to coordinate the education program.

County Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser said the West Nile season generally peaks during the summer, but that human cases could show up for months. There were 35 human cases reported last year in Riverside County and 19 human cases in 2012. No one in Riverside County has died from the illness since 2008.

"Taking precautions gives resident the ability to help themselves," Kaiser said. "That is the most important part."

Here are some steps that residents can take:

- Protect yourself against mosquito bites by using 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 percent or less on older children. Lemon eucalyptus oil should not be used on children under three years of age.
- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. Dawn and dusk are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities planned for those hours.
- Clothing can help reduce mosquito bites. Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from skin.
- Mosquito-proof your home. Drain standing water, where mosquitos lay their eggs. Limit the number of places for mosquitoes to breed by draining/discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty unused flowerpots and wading pools. Change water in birdbaths and pet bowls at least weekly.
- Make sure screens fit tightly on all windows and doors to keep mosquitoes outside.

Contact the Riverside County Vector Control program at (951) 766-9454 or your local vector-control district to report mosquito problems, request mosquito fish and report neglected pools or standing water as potential mosquito sources. Visit the department online at [www.rivcoeh.org](http://www.rivcoeh.org) to obtain more information.