

# **LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAM NO. 18**

## **WEST NILE VIRUS INFORMATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Los Angeles Unified School District Pest of the Month Programs No. 15 and 17 presented information of West Nile Virus (WNV). Since that time, there have been a number of developments pertaining to the epidemiology of this disease in California. WNV is now well entrenched in southern California, it is spreading rapidly, many more cases of the disease are being reported daily, and it is receiving constant coverage in print and electronic media. As we progress into the summer months, it is a foregone conclusion that many more cases of WNV will emerge in Los Angeles County. As people become more aware of this disease, there will be elevated public concern and people will begin asking all sorts of questions about this disease.

### **WEBSITE INFORMATION**

For updated information on West Nile Virus, visit the California WNV website at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)

National information can be obtained at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

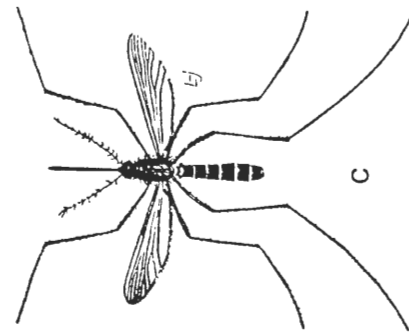
Additional information can be obtained from the University of California, Davis website at <http://vector.ucdavis.edu/arbo.html>

### **CURRENT STATUS**

Current information on West Nile Virus in southern California is as follows:

- Eighteen cases of WNV have now been recorded from southern California. Twelve are from San Bernardino County. Many of these cases are from the Fontana area to the extent that San Bernardino County Vector Control initiated fogging using powered ground application equipment in certain areas of Fontana where adult mosquito populations were considered to be too high.
- Three cases were from Riverside County and the other three were from Los Angeles County (one each from Arcadia, El Monte, and West Covina).

**PLEASE REFER TO LAUSD PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAMS  
15 AND 17 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WEST NILE  
VIRUS.**



## LAUSD PROBLEMS WITH WEST NILE VIRUS.

Last week, I investigated three complaints about potential mosquito breeding sites at various LAUSD schools. The common factor in each of these cases is **EXCESSIVE IRRIGATION** of greenery resulting in standing water at several locations. Over watering of landscape, turf, trees, ornamentals, gardens, etc. is a waste of a costly, precious, and limiting resource, namely, water. Southern California has been experiencing drought conditions for the past 5 years. Water is scarce and in short supply. Please don't waste water by irrigating more than is necessary. Water logged soils are fertile ground for pathogenic root rot fungi that kill trees and other vegetation. Muddy ground and wet hardscapes resulting from over watering are slip, slide, and fall hazards particularly on school grounds. Water is a costly resource. At a time of shrinking budgets, everyone needs to do his/her part to conserve water and save taxpayers money. **Check your irrigation timers and fix them if they need fixing. Adjust days to water and run time of sprinklers so as to give plants just the right amount of water that they need to grow and be aesthetically pleasing. If you are squishing water under your shoes when you are walking on athletic fields, you are over watering. Contrary to some people's belief, over watering DO NOT foster healthy, green plants. Plant roots need oxygen. In water logged soil the oxygen is displaced by water making it impossible for plant roots to breathe.**

**Accumulations of water on school grounds because of over irrigation are now creating fertile breeding grounds for mosquitoes that vector WNV. Please help to protect the health of the children by not creating and fostering conditions that are conducive to mosquito breeding on school grounds.**

## DEAD CROWS ON CAMPUSES.

Los Angeles Unified School District Pest Management Department have been receiving many calls from plant managers regarding dead crows found on campus. State Department of Health Services is no longer responding to calls to retrieve dead crows because crows are dying all over the place. Dead crows are strong indications that West Nile Virus is circulating in the bird population in the area. If you find a dead crow on campus, wear gloves or use a shovel to put the carcass in a trash bag. Tie the top of the trash bag and then put it in another trash bag (double bag it) and then tie the top of that bag and throw it in the trash dumpster. A dead crow carcass is not infective and you cannot contract WNV from doing what is described above.

**Please respond to a call about a dead crow (or any other dead bird) on your campus immediately. This will prevent curious kids from handling a dead crow (or other animal carcass) with their bare hands.**

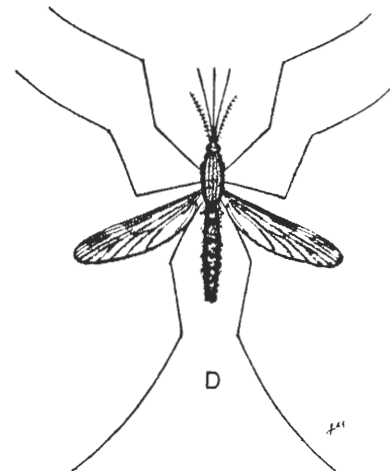
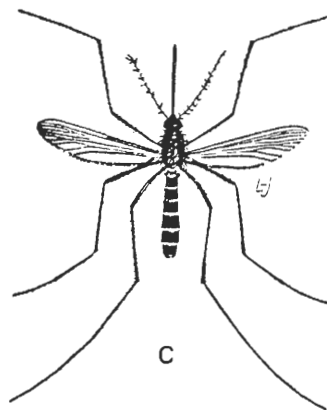
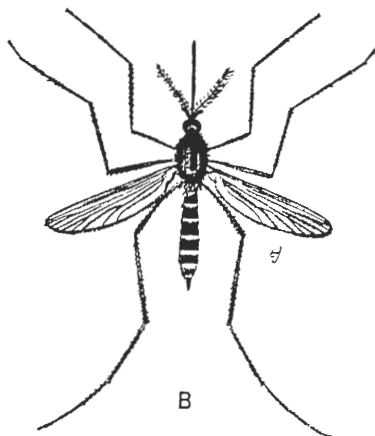
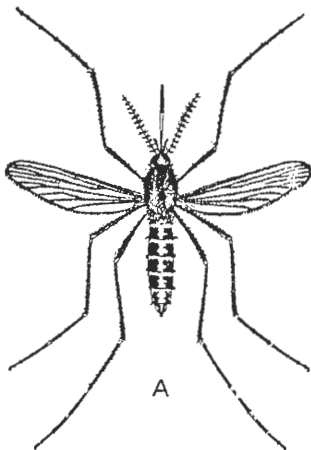
## **FIGHT THE BITE.**

You can only contract WNV from being bitten by a mosquito. Use common sense to protect yourself, your loved ones, and students from being bitten by mosquitoes. Refer to LAUSD Pest of the Month Programs 15 and 17 for more information on WNV. Visit the web sites listed in this program for more information on West Nile Virus.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WEST NILE VIRUS**

Two additional information sheets are attached here for your enlightenment. These are: **Questions and Answers about West Nile Virus** and **I've Been Bitten by a Mosquito ...Should I be Concerned About West Nile Virus**. Please take some time to read this information and share it with others. As we progress into the summer months, mosquito activity will peak and people will be asking a lot of questions about West Nile Virus. Take the time to educate yourself so that you can communicate intelligently with anyone who may question you about this disease.

Prepared by Hanif Gulmahamad, Ph.D., LAUSD IPM Coordinator  
Date: 13 July, 2004



# Questions and Answers about West Nile Virus (WNV)

- Q. What is the West Nile virus (WNV)?
- A. WNV is a virus that was first discovered in Uganda in the 1930's. It is very similar to another virus that is present in the United States, St. Louis Encephalitis virus.
- Q. Where did West Nile virus come from?
- A. WNV has been commonly found in humans and birds and other vertebrates in Africa, Eastern Europe, West Asia, and the Middle East, but until 1999 had not been documented in the Western Hemisphere.
- Q. How long has West Nile virus been in the U.S.?
- A. Scientists believe the virus has been in the eastern U.S. since the early summer of 1999, possibly longer.
- Q. Is the disease seasonal in its occurrence?
- A. In the temperate zone of the world, West Nile encephalitis cases occur primarily in the late summer or early fall. In the southern climates where temperatures are milder, WNV can be transmitted year round.

## Transmission of West Nile Virus

- Q. How do people get West Nile encephalitis?
- A. Most commonly, people become infected by the bite of a mosquito infected with WNV.
- Q. What is the basic transmission cycle?
- A. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds, which circulate the virus in their blood. Infected mosquitoes can then transmit WNV to humans and animals while biting to take blood. During blood feeding, the virus may be injected into the animal or human, where it may multiply, possibly causing illness.
- Q. If I live in an area where birds or mosquitoes with West Nile virus have been reported and a mosquito bites me, am I likely to get sick?
- A. No. Even in areas where the virus is circulating, very few mosquitoes are infected with the virus. Even if the mosquito is infected, less than 1% of people who get bitten and become infected will get severely ill. The chances you will become severely ill from any single mosquito bite are extremely small.
- Q. Can you get West Nile encephalitis from another person?
- A. No. West Nile encephalitis is NOT transmitted from person-to-person through casual contact. There is evidence that WNV may be transmitted through organ transplants and blood transfusions if the donor was infected.
- Q. Can you get West Nile virus directly from birds?
- A. There is no evidence that a person can get the virus from handling infected birds, whether live or dead. However, persons should avoid bare-handed contact when handling *any* dead animals. Use gloves and double plastic bags to handle any dead bird.
- Q. How does West Nile virus actually cause severe illness and death in humans?
- A. Following transmission by an infected mosquito, WNV can multiply in the person's blood system and cross the blood-brain barrier to reach the brain. The virus can interfere with normal central nervous system functioning and cause inflammation of brain tissue.
- Q. What proportion of people with severe illness due to West Nile virus die?
- A. Less than 1% of persons infected with West Nile virus will develop severe illness. Among those who have developed a severe illness with WNV, between 3% and 15% have died. Most of the deaths have occurred among the elderly.

