

# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAM No. 34

### Mosquitoes and West Nile virus situation in 2007

There has not been much rainfall in southern California this past winter. As of this writing, we are far below average in Los Angeles County with regards to precipitation. This has led some people to incorrectly believe that we do not have to worry about mosquitoes and their possible transmission of West Nile virus which can cause a fatal illness in people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Most mosquitoes which breed in cities and other urban areas do so in human-created water sources. These mosquito water breeding sources have nothing to do with rainfall. Thus, we still have to be concerned about mosquitoes and possible West Nile virus transmission in dry years.

**The West Nile virus is still here. It is still being circulated in various animal populations.** As of March 2007, at least seven counties have reported West Nile virus activity in birds and horses. Six dead birds have tested positive for West Nile virus from the following four counties: Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Santa Clara. No human cases have been reported to date for 2007.

Standing water from various man-made sources are excellent breeding locations for mosquitoes. When the weather is warm, mosquitoes can complete their life cycle in 4 to 7 days. Get rid of stagnant water at least weekly on district properties to prevent mosquito breeding and protect students, teachers, and staff from becoming infected with West Nile virus.

### BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS CHECKLIST

Here are some simple things that plant managers and their staffs can do to prevent mosquito from breeding on district properties.

- Clean and hose out birdbaths at least weekly.
- Water can collect from sprinkler irrigation in chain link fence posts. Make sure that all chain link fence posts are capped.
- Cover and/or turn all potential water containers upside down so that they don't catch and hold water. These include buckets, bottles, cans, cups, jars, flower pots, etc.
- Keep all outdoor drains clean and free-flowing. Remember that this applies to all underground drains also.
- Do not over-irrigate. Prevent water from accumulating in low-lying areas by not over-irrigating.
- Do not use black plastic sheeting to prevent weed growth as these catch and hold water from irrigation. Use landscape fabric instead which does a good job of preventing weeds but allow water to go through.
- Fix all water leaks. This includes leaks from air conditioning units.

- Check outdoor furniture and ornaments for nooks and crannies that could catch and hold water.
- Drill drainage holes in tire swings and in playground equipment where water can collect.
- Remove water from tarps that may be covering outdoor materials.
- Clean and properly chlorinate pools even when not in use.
- Don't over-water potted plants. Drain saucers at least weekly with a turkey baster.
- Make sure that rain gutters are clean and free of debris.
- Make sure that recycling bins have drainage holes in the bottom. If drainage holes are in the sides, enough water can collect in the bottom for mosquitoes to breed in. Be aware that recyclables kept in recycling bins can catch and hold water. Make sure recycling bins are emptied frequently so as to prevent ants and flies from breeding in them.
- Dispose of old, unwanted tires as they are common mosquito breeding sources. Drill drainage holes in tires used in retaining walls, landscaping, and swing sets.
- Get rid of any trash that could hold water including cans, cups, foil, plastic, etc.
- Eliminate water from dead tree stumps and hollow areas in tree roots and limbs. Fill tree cavities with sand or mortar.
- If bases of table umbrellas and basketball hoop supports catch and retain water, cap them tightly or seal with duct tape.
- Store wading pools and wheelbarrows vertically or turn them over.

### **The following web sources provide useful information on mosquitoes and West Nile virus**

- **<http://www.mvcac.org/agencies.htm>**
- **<http://www.westnile.ca.gov>**

In cooperation with California Department of Health Services and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation produced three "Fight the Bite" handouts. They are: Proper repellent use, Protecting workers from mosquitoes, and A home and garden checklist to prevent mosquitoes. These can be downloaded from <http://www.schoolipm.info>, click on "Managing Pests" in the left hand column, and then click on "Pest Prevention and Management." Under "Resources" click on "Fight the Bite" handouts. The handouts are available in English and Spanish.

**Additional information on mosquitoes and West Nile virus can be obtained from Los Angeles Unified School District universal resource locator at <http://laschools.org/pom>**

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