

## **West Nile Virus Infected Horse Identified in Santa Ynez Valley**

*The Mosquito and Vector Management District Reminds Residents of Measures to Limit Mosquito Exposure and Population Numbers*

Sept. 30, 2025 — The Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County is alerting residents that a Santa Ynez Valley horse tested positive for a mosquito-borne West Nile Virus Infection in late August. The 5-year-old horse became ill but has since recovered. This was the first West Nile Virus discovery in Santa Barbara County since 2020, and though the virus is rare, it is a reminder of its presence and the need to be mindful of mosquitoes. The District conducted mosquito trap surveys near the incident site in early September but the mosquitoes caught in the traps all tested negative for the virus.

Horses can be vaccinated against West Nile Virus, but the infected horse had not been vaccinated since 2022. MVMD advises horse owners to maintain on-schedule vaccinations for their animals to help prevent contracting and spreading the virus.

Humans can get West Nile Virus from the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who contract the virus remain asymptomatic; however, about 1 in 5 people who are infected develop symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle ache and nausea. In about 1 percent of people who get West Nile Virus, infection can lead to serious complications including encephalitis or meningitis, coma and even death.

Residents are urged to take action to “Fight the Bite” by following these 3 Ds:

- Deet — Use Deet or other repellents approved by the Environmental Protection Agency;
- Dawn or Dusk — Avoid being outside at these times when the mosquitoes are most active;
- Drain – Empty all sources of stagnant water that mosquitoes will lay their eggs in including buckets, bird baths, clogged rain gutters, old tires, containers of all kinds, unused hot tubs, etc.

Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants can also provide protection from mosquitoes. Larger sources where mosquitoes are breeding, such as neglected swimming pools or stagnant water in creek beds and washes, for example, can be reported to the District at (805) 969-5050.

Wild birds are the main source of the virus for mosquitoes. Crows, ravens, jays and magpies, are especially susceptible to the virus and often get sick and die after they are infected. Residents are urged to report dead birds to the California Department of Public Health’s “Dead Bird Hotline.” If the dead birds are still in good condition, the District will pick them up and have them tested for West Nile Virus. Reports can be filed online year-round at <http://westnile.ca.gov/report.php> or by calling 1-877-968-2473 (1-877-WNV-BIRD; the call center closes for the winter season on Oct. 10). Horses are also highly susceptible to the virus, but fortunately a vaccine is available.

About the Mosquito and Vector Management District of Santa Barbara County:

Our mission is to protect the public's health and safety from vectors and vector-borne diseases.

The Mosquito & Vector Management District is an independent local government agency offering community-based services with tax funding and decision-making by an appointed board of trustees. For more information, visit <https://www.mvmdistrict.org/> or follow us on Instagram and Facebook @mosquitosantabarbara