

## REGION: Mendocino County resident tests positive for West Nile Virus

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UKIAH &ndash; The Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency reported on Monday that it has confirmed the first human case of West Nile Virus in 2008.

The Mendocino County resident was infected within the county, officials reported.

In 2007 one resident of Mendocino County was diagnosed with West Nile, but that person had traveled and became infected outside of the county, Mendocino County officials reported.

Across the state, 236 human cases have been reported so far this year, with none reported in 2008 in Lake County, according to the California West Nile Virus Web site.

West Nile Virus is endemic in California and it is important to take precautions to prevent infection whether traveling or not.

The disease is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. A person or animal that has been infected by West Nile Virus may have no symptoms of illness or they may become severely ill.

Severe symptoms occur in approximately one in 150 people (less than 1 percent) of persons infected by West Nile. These symptoms can include high fever, headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, tremors, coma, convulsions, loss of muscle control, numbness, paralysis and vision loss. Symptoms can last several weeks and neurological effects may be permanent.

Mild symptoms occur in up to 20 percent of persons infected with West Nile. Symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes swollen lymph glands, or a rash on the chest, stomach and back. A person with these symptoms can feel ill for a few days, while other persons may feel ill for several weeks.

No symptoms occur in approximately 4 out of 5 people (80 percent) who are infected with West Nile. They do not have any symptoms at all and do not feel ill.

If you or somebody you know has had a fever for seven days or more with any other symptoms seek medical care.

Persons who are at risk for West Nile Virus are those over age 50, or those who spend a lot of time outdoors between dawn and dusk.

To prevent the disease, it's important to protect oneself from mosquito bites, so use an insect repellent when outdoors and avoid being outside during the hours of dawn and dusk, as many mosquitoes are most active at this time. Wear long sleeves and pants that are light in color as this can help to see the mosquitoes if they land on you.

Other important preventive measures include emptying containers with standing water around your home, such as flowerpots, barrels, old tires and rain gutters; changing the water weekly in birdbaths and frequently change the water in your pet's water bowl, as these items are potential areas for mosquitoes to breed; and repairing or replacing torn screens on the windows and doors of your home to help keep mosquitoes outside.

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