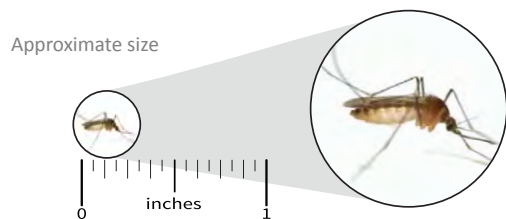


## WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS?

West Nile virus (WNV) is a common mosquito-borne virus in the United States. WNV was first detected in California in 2003 and is now established throughout the state. WNV transmission to people occurs most often in summer and early fall when temperatures are warm and mosquitoes are active. This virus can make people sick and can lead to death.

## WHICH MOSQUITOES SPREAD WEST NILE VIRUS?

Several species of *Culex* mosquitoes spread WNV. *Culex* mosquitoes are common in California.

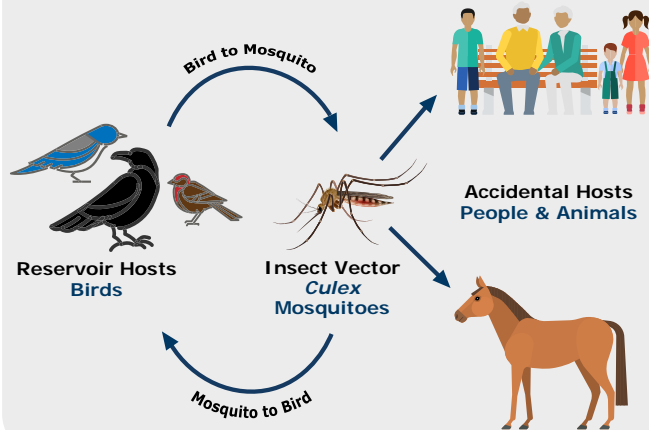


*Culex* mosquitoes usually feed on birds, the main source of West Nile virus for mosquitoes. These mosquitoes will also bite people, but WNV is not spread from person to person by mosquitoes (see the **WNV transmission cycle**).

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WEST NILE VIRUS?

- About **80%** of people infected with WNV have no symptoms.
- About **20%** of people infected with WNV will become ill with symptoms such as fever, headache, and nausea. Most people recover completely. However, some people may feel tired and sick for weeks.
- Less than **1%** of people infected with WNV will become very ill. In these cases, the virus affects the brain and/or nervous system. Symptoms include vision loss, numbness, and paralysis. WNV can be fatal.

## WEST NILE VIRUS TRANSMISSION CYCLE

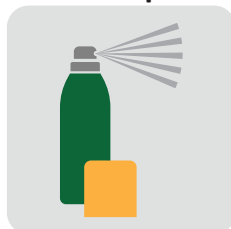


## Who is most at risk of becoming very ill from West Nile virus?

- People over the age of 60 years
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with diabetes, kidney disease, or some other medical condition

These groups should take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites. See your doctor if you think you have WNV.

## Mosquito-bite prevention



Use repellent



Stay covered



Fix screens



Drain water

## WHY ARE BIRDS IMPORTANT?

Many types of birds carry WNV and can die from infection. This makes them good indicators of where WNV is active.

**If you find a dead bird, please report it to the WNV and Dead Bird Hotline toll-free at 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473)** (available from mid-April to mid-October) or by filling out a report online at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) (available year-round). If the bird meets the criteria for testing, someone will contact you to arrange a pickup. All dead bird reports are useful, even if some birds cannot be tested.

Two common birds likely to get WNV include:



American Crow  
16-21 inches



California Scrub-Jay  
11-12 inches

More bird photos can be seen on the online report form.

## DO OTHER ANIMALS GET WEST NILE VIRUS?

Yes. WNV can cause severe illness in **horses** and even death. Symptoms include stumbling, muscle twitching, and reduced appetite. **A WNV vaccine for horses is available and strongly recommended.**

A **dog or cat** may occasionally get WNV, but dogs and cats usually do not become sick. Talk to your veterinarian if you are concerned about your pet.

## PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM WNV!

- Prevent mosquito bites — apply insect repellent with EPA-registered active ingredients **DEET**, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus before you go outside. Be sure to follow label directions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and insect repellent if spending time outside at **DAWN** and **DUSK**. WNV-carrying mosquitoes are most active at those times.
- Install **DOOR** and window screens, and repair any ripped or torn screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- **DUMP** and **DRAIN** standing water around your yard (WNV mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water). Change water in pet dishes, birdbaths, and wading pools at least once a week. Keep gutters free from debris.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if you are being bothered by mosquitoes where you live or work.



Dump out all standing water in your yard.

## HOW IS CALIFORNIA WORKING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF WEST NILE VIRUS?

California's comprehensive WNV surveillance program incorporates more than dead bird testing. Mosquitoes and sentinel chickens are also tested for WNV. Blood from human blood donors is also screened. All of this information helps local agencies know where they need to focus their mosquito control efforts to reduce the risk of people getting infected by WNV.

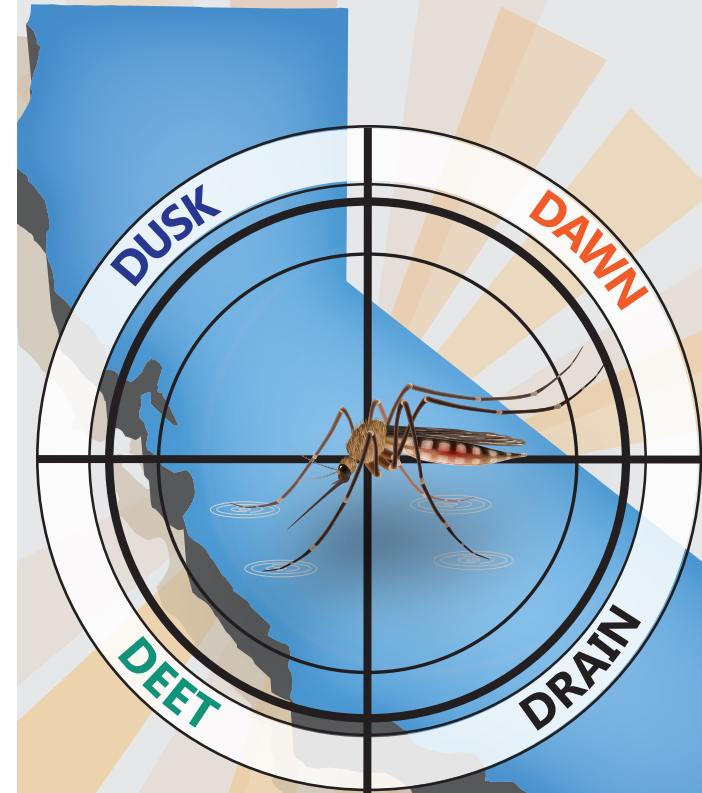
The California West Nile Virus Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the California Department of Public Health, mosquito and vector control agencies, local health departments, and the University of California, Davis.



Thank you for helping to track and prevent West Nile virus in California  
[www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov)  
**1-877-WNV-BIRD**  
(1-877-968-2473)

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# West Nile Virus



## What You Need to Know

