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NEWS RELEASE

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First Cases of West Nile Virus Reported in Kern this year

The Kern County Public Health Services Department has received confirmation of the first West Nile virus (WNV) infection in humans in Kern County this year. This includes two confirmed cases of WNV and one asymptomatic infection in a blood donor. A confirmed case of WNV includes both a positive laboratory result and a compatible symptomatic illness, whereas an asymptomatic infection is typically identified during the screening of blood donation.

WNV is a disease spread by mosquitoes most often during the summer and early fall when WNV-carrying mosquitoes are most active. While many mosquito-borne illnesses such as WNV cause only mild symptoms in most people, the infection can cause severe illness and even death in rare cases. Up to 20% of people who become infected with WNV will have symptoms that may include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting and sometimes a skin rash. Less than 1% will develop severe illness affecting the brain and/or nervous system, with symptoms that can include high fever, neck stiffness, and confusion. We encourage concerned residents who are experiencing symptoms to contact their healthcare provider.

“Kern residents should continue to take precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes,” says Brynn Carrigan, Director of Kern County Public Health. “We all need to remove standing water around our property to help reduce opportunities for mosquitoes to flourish.”

Reduce Mosquito Breeding Sites:

- **Remove** standing or stagnate water from containers such flowerpots, fountains, birdbaths, pet bowls, and wading pools.
- **Clean/scrub** containers that collect water weekly to remove any remaining eggs.
- **Maintain** swimming pools in working condition.
- **Stock** garden ponds with fish that eat mosquito larvae.
- **Report** areas of mosquito infestation to your local vector control district.

Decrease Your Risk of Mosquito-Transmitted Infections:

- **Avoid** mosquitoes and mosquito-infested areas at all times of the day.
- **Wear** long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors.
- **Apply** mosquito repellent to exposed skin when outdoors.
- **Ensure** doors and windows have screens in good repair to keep mosquitoes out of your home.

Please visit our interactive WNV webpage <https://kernpublichealth.com/west-nile-virus/> that is updated regularly. Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live, work, or play.

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