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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRST HUMAN CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN 2009 REPORTED IN KINGS COUNTY

HANFORD - The Kings County Health Department announced today that the first human case of West Nile Virus in 2009 has been confirmed in Kings County. The middle-aged man became ill with West Nile fever in late July. He was not hospitalized and is expected to make a full recovery.

In 2008, there were two cases in Kings County residents. Seven cases were reported in 2007, which included one fatality. Since the county's first human case in 2005, there have been a total of 43 West Nile Virus cases, including four deaths.

This is the sixth human case reported in California this year – two others were in Kern County residents and one each has occurred in Contra Costa, San Diego and Orange County residents. In 2007, there were 445 cases statewide, including 15 fatalities related to the disease.

To date in 2009, the Kings Mosquito Abatement District has detected West Nile Virus in nine dead birds, 44 mosquito pools or sentinel chicken flocks. This is a large increase from last year when only one positive dead bird, one positive sentinel chicken and no positive mosquito pools were found.

According to the Kings County Health Officer, Dr. Michael Mac Lean, West Nile Virus will be a continuing presence in Kings County. Even when the mosquito infection rate is low, people can still be bitten by an infected mosquito. He noted that the Kings Mosquito Abatement District provides highly professional and effective mosquito control services.

Dr. MacLean added that there is also much that residents can do to reduce the risk of WNV to themselves and the community. "It is crucial that people be aware of WNV and know the measures they can take to prevent mosquito breeding and to minimize their exposure to mosquitoes and reduce the chance of becoming infected."

To reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases, individuals are urged to take the following precautions:

To reduce the number of mosquitoes:

- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including tires, cans, flowerpots, birdbaths, buckets, toys and puddles. Aquariums on porches, covered and uncovered boats, trash and recycle bins, animal water bowls and irrigation control boxes are all commonly overlooked as potential larval mosquito habitat in people's yards. Even the water trapped by the leaves of some plants such as bromeliads can breed mosquitoes. When it is impractical to eliminate them, such containers should be drained and flushed twice a week.
- Don't over-water your yard.
- Maintain your swimming pool. Empty children's wading pools between uses.
- For mosquito control in decorative ponds or water gardens, obtain free "mosquito fish" from the Kings Mosquito Abatement District at 584-3326. Alternatively, there are products available with brand names such as Mosquito Dunks[®] and Mosquito Torpedo[®] for the control of mosquito larvae.
- Thinning shrubs and cutting down tall grass and weeds will reduce the harborage areas and number of mosquitoes in your yard.

To reduce your chances of being bitten by mosquitoes:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts during dawn and dusk or in areas where mosquitoes are active.
- Apply insect repellent, such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535, according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Contact the Kings Mosquito Abatement District at 584-3326 if you are being bothered by mosquitoes or know of a potential mosquito-breeding source such as a neglected swimming pool.

Kings County residents are encouraged to call if they find birds that have been dead for less than 24 hours and do not appear to have died as a result of an injury from cats, dogs, cars, etc. Please call the toll-free Dead Bird Hot Line number is 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473) or reports can be made at the State's West Nile Virus website at <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>. People are asked not to call other

agencies to report dead birds, including the Kings County Health Department, the Kings Mosquito Abatement District, Kings County Animal Control or the Agricultural Commissioner.

West Nile Virus is one of a group of disease-causing viruses spread by mosquitoes. West Nile Virus first appeared on the East Coast in 1999 and steadily moved west. WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito and cannot be spread person to person.

Mosquitoes become infected with WNV when they feed on infected birds. Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with WNV will not get sick. Of those who do, only 2 in 10 will develop an illness that is similar to a bad flu. About one in 150 people infected will develop serious nervous system disease. In adults, the risk increases dramatically after age 50.