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~ News Release ~

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First Marin County Resident Tests Positive For West Nile Virus

(San Rafael) A 17 year old female resident of Novato is the first Marin County resident to test positive for West Nile virus (WNV). The test was done at Blood Centers of the Pacific as part of routine screening for blood donors. The girl had symptoms of a mild viral illness prior to her donation and does not currently have any symptoms of West Nile illness. West Nile is a viral disease of birds that can be transmitted to humans by a mosquito that has fed on an infected bird.

A human infection in Marin is not surprising given that the county has already had evidence of West Nile in San Rafael, San Anselmo, and Novato. In 2006, 4 birds, 1 mosquito pool, 1 horse, and 1 squirrel tested positive for WNV in Marin. West Nile activity has been reported in 51 of 59 counties in California this year, with human

infection reported in 169 individuals, including 14 asymptomatic blood donors, in 30 of those counties.

80% of infected individuals have no symptoms and most cases are mild. Symptoms of WNV range from mild flu-like conditions, such as fever, headache, and nausea, to a stiff neck, restlessness, stupor, delirium, and convulsions. Fatalities can occur in extreme cases.

West Nile season runs from May through October. Dr. Fred Schwartz, Marin County Public Health Officer, and Dr. Leigh Hall, Sonoma County Deputy Health Officer, along with the Marin Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District, remind citizens to take these protective measures:

- Avoid being outside when mosquitoes are most active, between dusk and dawn.
- When engaging in outdoor activities, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and apply insect repellent according to label instructions. Products containing the active ingredient DEET or Picaridin are the most effective, and oil of lemon eucalyptus is another option.
- Screen all windows and make sure the screens are in good repair.
- Cover septic tanks and screen roof vent pipes.
- Identify and eliminate all sources of standing water around your property.
- Remove water from rain gutters, boat covers, tires, tree holes, and plastic containers.

- Report dead crows, ravens, magpies, jays, and raptors that have been dead for less than 24 hrs. Online reporting is preferred at <http://westnile.ca.gov/deadbird.cfm>. The toll-free line to report dead birds is 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473).

For more information, visit the Marin County WNV webpage at www.co.marin.ca.us (search term WNV), and the California Department of Health Services WNV webpage at <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/home.php> .

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