



P.O. Box 3271, Modesto, CA 95353
Fax: (209) 558-8320
www.hsahealth.org

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CONTACT: East Side MAD: Lloyd Douglas
PHONE: 209.522-4098
Turlock MAD: Dave Heft
Phone: 209.634-1234

Record Amounts of Rain Coupled with Warming Temperatures Create Perfect Conditions for Mosquitoes

After the significant rainfall we received this winter, Mosquito experts throughout the state stress the need for Californians to **dump and drain** all standing water. According to the California Department of Water Resources, the San Joaquin Valley received nearly 125% of the average rainfall from October 2018 to February 2019. The heavy rainfall can lead to accumulated stagnant water, which in turn creates mosquito breeding sites.

In addition to mosquitoes being a nuisance, they also pose a serious public health risk as infected mosquitoes can spread viruses, which can cause debilitating cases of meningitis, encephalitis, and even death. West Nile Virus activity was detected in 41 counties in California in 2018 and there were 215 human WNV cases reported, of which 153 were the more severe neuroinvasive form. There were also 5 human Saint Louis Encephalitis Virus Cases in the state.

During 2018 in Stanislaus county there were 15 human cases of West Nile Virus and 1 case of Saint Louis Encephalitis Virus.

“Warm weather coupled with large amounts of stagnant water from recent rain events create the perfect conditions for mosquito breeding,” said Dave Heft, General Manager for Turlock Mosquito Abatement District. “Mosquitoes can lay their eggs in a wide range of water holding sources and can complete their life cycle, from egg to adult, in about a week. Residents must do their part to help protect public health by dumping and draining all standing water to eliminate mosquitoes from their communities.”

These signs point to an early and active mosquito season. To raise awareness and educate Californians about the public health threat mosquitoes pose to our communities, the California Legislature declared April 21-27, 2019 as Mosquito Awareness Week.

“Many of us, including myself, have lost dear friends and loved ones to mosquito-transmitted diseases like West Nile virus infection. The risks are all too real, and awareness is one critical tool we can use to save lives,” said Senator Henry Stern. “All Californians play an important role in protecting public health and should take simple measures to reduce the risk of mosquito-transmitted diseases in their community.”

The Turlock and Eastside Mosquito Abatement Districts also want to remind the public to be aware of the new invasive mosquito species which have been making their way around California (not yet detected in Stanislaus County). These species are aggressive day-biting mosquitoes found in urban areas. If you are experiencing daytime biting mosquitoes in town, please contact your District.

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These invasive *Aedes* mosquitoes, can vector zika, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever viruses. These mosquitoes continue to spread and are now established in 12 counties in the Central Valley and Southern California. With thousands of international travelers arriving or returning to California each year from areas where these viruses regularly occur, the potential for local transmission of imported diseases in the state is increasing. The arrival of a single traveler with an active infection into an area with invasive mosquitoes opens the door for these diseases to spread.

Please be aware aerial photography to identify neglected pools, will be occurring the week of April 22nd. This service aids the District in identifying pools which can potentially produce mosquitoes capable of transmitting viruses.

To minimize exposure to mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients, including DEET, picaradin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535, according to label instructions. Repellents keep mosquitoes from biting. DEET can be used safely on infants and children 2 months of age and older.
- Dress in loose-fitting long sleeves and pants.
- Install screens on windows and doors and keep them in good repair.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including in flower pots, old tires, buckets, pet dishes and trash cans.
- Repair leaking faucets and broken sprinklers.
- Clean rain gutters clogged with leaves.
- Report neglected swimming pools and day-biting mosquitoes to your local mosquito and vector control agency.

There are two mosquito abatement districts to serve residents in Stanislaus County. Residents north of the Tuolumne River should contact the Eastside Mosquito Abatement District at (209) 522-4098. Residents south of the Tuolumne River should contact the Turlock Mosquito Abatement District at turlockmosquito.org or (209) 634-1234.