

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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To: All Media

From: Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control
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Subject: Mosquitoes are Taking Flight - Dump and Drain - Fight the Bite!

As many residents know, this spring the mosquitoes are worse than ever! Because the Watsonville sloughs dried in the winter, the fish that prey on the mosquito larva died also, so the mosquitoes are breeding thickly. Also, the miles of small streams throughout Santa Cruz County have slowed to a trickle, forming small pools where mosquitoes are breeding. The County is experiencing rapidly warming and lengthening days, and the light spring rains were just enough to leave standing water in gutters and low places. Stagnant rainwater left in buckets, birdbaths, and tires is warmed by the sun and becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes, hungry for blood. This time of year, mosquitoes breed anywhere and everywhere in water held by tarps, boat bilges, clogged drains, gutters and unmaintained swimming pools, spas, fountains and fish ponds.

Mosquitoes are not only a nuisance, but a public health threat since the insects can carry West Nile virus picked up from biting infected birds. California had 379 human cases and fifteen fatalities due to West Nile virus in 2013.

"We're experiencing lots of mosquitoes breeding in the sloughs, streams, ponds and coastal marshes and we are controlling them in the larval stage. With the combination of the warm weather and all the water in yard containers, we really need for the public to do their part and empty any water that might be around their property," says Paul Binding, manager of Santa Cruz County Mosquito & Vector Control. "The mosquitoes that hatch now will be those that get a blood meal, lay eggs and keep the cycle going," he commented. "The idea is to keep those numbers down now to reduce an even worse infestation later this summer. The district's goal is to minimize the disease risk and nuisance to the public created by mosquitoes." "I know people are trying to conserve water, but please don't leave water around in buckets!"

This time of year it takes seven to ten days for a mosquito egg to develop into a flying blood-sucking insect. A female mosquito can lay between 50 to 200 eggs at a time, and a neglected swimming pool can produce hundreds of thousands of mosquitoes and infect an entire neighborhood. As drought conditions increase this summer, birds go to drink at stagnant water holes and can be more prone to be bitten by disease-transmitting mosquitoes.

As if our local mosquitoes are not bad enough, the yellow fever mosquito has invaded California and we need to detect them when they first arrive in the County. Please report any residential, day-biting mosquitoes!

To prevent mosquito bites use insect repellent, but to avoid the bugs altogether drain any standing water around your home. Standing water pools can be breeding grounds for hundreds of thousands of mosquitoes. If you see standing water that you cannot empty or drain, or if you know of a neglected swimming pool, you can contact Mosquito and Vector Control at 454-2590 or <http://www.agdept.com/mvc.html>. The district provides free mosquito-eating fish and is also asking people to report dead birds to the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-877-WNV-Bird or <http://www.westnile.ca.gov> so that they may be tested for mosquito-borne viruses. Spring is also the best time to vaccinate horses against West Nile virus.