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West Nile virus, mosquitoes still a concern during summer



Aaron Lumsden of the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District preps his truck for mosquito fogging Tuesday afternoon. (Matt Ball — Contributed)

By **SHARON MARTIN** | smartin@chicoer.com | Chico Enterprise-Record
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CHICO — It's normal for mosquitoes to be active within Butte County during the summer months.

With the coronavirus taking precedent at the local, state and national levels, the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District staff is making sure residents of Butte County should still be taking preventative measures against West Nile virus.

The district has received more calls about mosquitoes than in previous years and the mosquitoes which are known to carry West Nile have been thriving in the recent hot weather.

"We're seeing a lot more of the problematic mosquitoes this year right out the gates than we have in years past," said Matt Ball, the district manager. "That wouldn't be attributed to anything new we're dealing with other than it's the perfect meteorological conditions."

Mosquitoes breed in warm water and the recent string of days with temperatures of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer have led to perfect breeding grounds. Coronavirus can not be transmitted through mosquitoes according to the World Health Organization.

With the coronavirus pandemic, more people are staying home or spending time outdoors. Pools, whether in-ground or not, involve long-standing warm water which can lead to more mosquitoes.

"Everywhere in the valley is just blanketed with mosquitoes right now," Ball said. "That's not abnormal; it's just that some of the populations of the ones we're concerned with are a little bit higher than where we'd like to be."

West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne virus, has been in Butte County since 2004, Ball said. Severe symptoms for West Nile include fever, headache, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, muscle weakness, vision loss and paralysis. Mild symptoms are fever and body aches.

Ball said there hasn't been a case of West Nile this summer, but it has been found in the Sutter and Yuba County areas.

"People need to be aware it's going to be a matter of days before we find our first West Nile positive mosquitoes," Ball said. "They really need to take precautions and treat every mosquito as a loaded missile starting in May and going all the way to October."



Ball said the peak timeframe for people to get infected with West Nile is in July, August and September. The best way to prevent getting West Nile virus is to wear repellent containing DEET along with long sleeves and pants when mosquitoes are most active which is from dusk through dawn. Repairing windows and screens so they are sealed off to mosquitoes and emptying any containers with standing water such as flowerpots, gutters, pet water dishes and birdbaths will help as well.

Fogging

The Mosquito and Vector Control District has been routinely fogging communities within Butte County and even parts of Hamilton City and Glenn County.

On Wednesday, fogging will take place in the area of Honcut, Pacific Heights, Palermo and South Oroville. Fogging runs from sunset to 11 p.m.

Thursday, Nord, M&T Ranch area, Meridian Road Nelson, Richvale and Thermalito will be fogged from sunset to 11 p.m. Fogging is planned for Gridley on Monday.

“Right now we’re experiencing very high populations of the mosquitoes that can carry and transmit West Nile,” Ball said. “That’s why we’re out fogging to make sure those populations are reduced so the risk of West Nile virus is reduced. I don’t want any of our residents to get sick from a bite of a mosquito.”

In order to help combat mosquitoes, the district is also giving away mosquitofish in the areas of Concow, Paradise, Magalia, Hamilton City, Gridley and Chico. Mosquitofish can be picked up by appointment at 444 Otterson Drive in Chico or at the district’s main office located at 5117 Larkin Road in Oroville. For more information, the district can be reached at 533-6038 or 342-7350.

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