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City of Beverly Hills Asks Residents to Follow Safety Guidelines to Prevent West Nile Virus

(Beverly Hills, CA) – The City of Beverly Hills is asking residents to minimize health risk from the West Nile Virus (WNV) by taking some simple precautionary measures.

The West Nile Virus, transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito, has already been detected this year in Franklin Canyon. One of the chickens in a Franklin Canyon sentinel flock kept by Los Angeles County West Vector Control District has tested positive for West Nile Virus. Sentinel flocks are monitored for the presence of viral agents.

Health officials emphasize that the risk of serious illness to humans is low. Most people who are infected do not get sick at all. Ten to 15 percent of infected persons experience moderate symptoms, including fever, headache and body aches. However, the elderly and those with lowered immune systems are more susceptible. Less than 1 percent will develop serious illnesses, such as meningitis and encephalitis.

West Nile Virus is transmitted to humans from mosquitoes that have fed on infected birds. To reduce the risk, the California Department of Health Services is requesting that everyone:

- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, at dawn and the first two hours after sunset.

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact the Los Angeles County West Vector Control District at (310) 915-7370 if there is a significant mosquito problem in your neighborhood.

In addition, please report any birds that have been dead for less than 48 hours to the California Department of Health Services toll-free hotline at 1-877-WNV-BIRD. After you have reported a dead bird, you will be contacted if that bird will be picked up for WNV testing. If you have not been contacted within 24 hours of your report, you may safely dispose of the dead bird in your trash. There is no evidence that WNV can be acquired by handling dead birds, but it is best not to handle the dead bird with your bare hands. Use gloves, a shovel, or a plastic bag to place the bird in a trash bag for disposal. Please DO NOT freeze dead birds. WNV is transmitted by mosquitoes, so the best way to protect yourself from the disease is to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes.

For more information about the West Nile Virus in California or to report dead birds online, visit the California Department of Health Services website at <http://www.westnile.ca.gov/>.

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