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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 8, 2005

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## West Nile Virus Season Approaching

### City Officials Remind Residents to Report Dead Birds

**San Francisco, CA**—West Nile Virus (WNV), a potentially serious illness that resulted in the deaths of 28 individuals in California last year and infected 830 others, first makes its presence known among the bird population. WNV is spread among birds by mosquitoes, and sometimes infects people as well. State and local health authorities track the emergence and subsequent spread of WNV throughout the state by monitoring infection among the dead bird population. The successful reporting and testing of birds depends on the public's awareness of dead birds in their neighborhoods and immediately reporting dead birds to the State's WNV dead bird hotline.

Local officials are reminding San Francisco residents that if they find a dead bird in their neighborhood or workplace location to follow these guidelines:

- Birds must have died within 24 hours of reporting to be suitable for testing. Birds with visible signs of decay or damage or strong odor may be reported, but will not be collected.
- As long as the bird is in a location that is safe from further damage, leave the bird where it was found.
- Birds may be moved to a safer location until the inspector arrives. Use caution when handling a dead bird by picking it up with a combination of a shovel, plastic bags and gloves.
- Report the bird to the State's WNV dead bird hotline at 1/877-WNV-BIRD. Be sure to give the exact location and the date it was found.
- The public is encouraged to file the report on-line at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov) where complete, updated information on West Nile in California can be found.

Local officials say there have been no reports of a bird testing positive for WNV in San Francisco so far this year, though 20 birds have been tested since January 2005. In 2004, San Francisco's first positive bird was collected in late July. Throughout the season, thirteen more birds tested positive: six in August, five in September, one in October and one in November.

Statewide, the number of dead birds testing positive for WNV has jumped in California, with 109 birds statewide testing positive last week, compared with only 28 birds the previous week. WNV has been detected in 34 of California's 58 counties so far this year. WNV was detected in all counties last year and is expected to be detected statewide again this year.

"San Francisco is fortunate that we have had no human cases of West Nile Virus," noted Mitchell Katz, MD, Director of Health. "We are hoping that holds true this year as well. Because dead birds can indicate that the virus is in the local environment, we want people to report them and we especially want individuals to take precautions against getting bitten by mosquitoes." Dr. Katz also emphasized that while it has not been shown that individuals can get WNV from handling a dead bird, it is never advisable to touch a dead wild animal with bare hands.

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