



Maricopa County

News Release

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May 22, 2006

Man dies from Saint Louis Encephalitis – Reminds us that warmer months bring greater risk of mosquito-borne diseases

PHOENIX - Mosquitoes breed throughout the year in Arizona, but mosquito activity and the potential for disease transmission increase as the weather gets warmer. The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) recently confirmed that a male in his forties from the East Valley died from St. Louis Encephalitis virus (SLE), a mosquito-borne disease much like West Nile Virus.

This is the first SLE related death that has been confirmed in Maricopa County in recent years. Since the year 2000, there have been 14 laboratory reported SLE human cases and three other probable cases in the County.

"This unfortunate death from SLE is another reminder for the public to take mosquito season seriously," said Dr. Bob England, acting director of Maricopa County Public Health Department. "I can't stress enough, clean your yard of any standing water that can breed mosquitoes and if you are going to be outside, slap on some insect repellent."

As with West Nile virus, SLE is a mosquito-borne viral disease that causes inflammation and swelling of the brain. Most SLE infections in humans produce only headache and fever. In severe cases the virus infects the brain, causing confusion, paralysis, coma and even death.

The only way for humans to acquire the disease is through the bite of an infected mosquito that has previously bitten a bird that carries the virus. SLE and WNV cannot be transmitted directly from person to person or from birds to people.

"Maricopa County is dedicated to preventing the breeding of mosquitoes, conducting an active surveillance for WNV and mosquito-borne encephalitis," said Joy Rich, Maricopa County Assistant Manager.

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“For months we have been testing mosquitoes, larvaciding, and reminding residents about how to protect themselves from West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne diseases,” Rich added.

Maricopa County reminds you to take the following precautions to prevent West Nile virus and reduce their risk of other mosquito-borne diseases:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around your property by removing standing water in potted plants, tires, buckets and other containers
- Keep fountains and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris
- Report to Maricopa County stagnant water and green pools
- Repair damaged window and door screens
- Contact Maricopa County for possible WNV infected dead birds drop-off locations
- When outdoors wear long sleeves and long pants to prevent mosquito bites
- Avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active
- When outdoors wear a mosquito repellent (follow label instructions, especially for use on children)

So far this year, Maricopa County Department of Public Health has not received any laboratory-confirmation of human cases of West Nile Virus infection. Last year, Maricopa County had 79 confirmed West Nile Virus cases, and 4 deaths.

For more information on West Nile virus and other mosquito communicable diseases, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, please call (602) 506-0700 or visit www.maricopa.gov/wnv

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