



ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

Date: October 27, 2003

Attention: ASCIP Members

Subject: WEST NILE VIRUS

West Nile Virus is a disease which has been the subject of media reports for some time and has now been reported in several areas of California.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus as well as other illnesses in birds may include inability to fly, disorientation, or unexplained death. Health agencies watch certain 'sentinel species' of birds as indicators of environmental health and the movement of disease. Spontaneous die-offs or illnesses of birds may be an indication of a disease process at work.

In the past, ASCIP has discussed animal illness issues with the local County Veterinary Public Health Agency and County Acute Communicable Disease Control Branch of Public Health. Both public agencies monitor and investigate issues related to the transmission of disease. Each California County will generally have an agency responsible for public or veterinary health issues.

This bloodborne disease is transmitted by mosquitoes which are carriers of the West Nile virus, an illness generally affecting birds and livestock, but under certain conditions may be passed to humans. The Centers for Disease Control advise that transmission to humans is almost always associated with mosquito bites and may not be spread by contact with diseased persons, birds, or animals. However, very young children explore by handling and tasting their environment. Older children may investigate sick or dead animals out of curiosity. ASCIP believes that it is important to ensure that children do not come in contact with any sick, dead, or potentially diseased animals to avoid the potential for an infection from any source. Inspections of locations where children are present should include a sweep for sick or dead birds or other animals.

Site Administrators should ensure that no areas exist which might support the breeding of mosquitoes. The local County Vector Control Agency will usually address issues and inquiries related to mosquitoes and how to implement prudent control measures.

The California Department of Health Services has created a West Nile Virus hotline where the public may report such concerns. Callers to the hotline may report crows, ravens, jays, magpies, and hawks that have been dead for less than 24 hours in their area by calling at 1-877-WNV-BIRD (1-877-968-2473). The WNV hotline is staffed from 8:00am to 4:00pm weekdays.

Reviewed July, 2006