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August 20, 2012

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. JEFielding MD
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **WEST NILE VIRUS**

This is in response to the July 17, 2012 motion by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich directing the Department of Public Health (DPH) to do the following: 1) in conjunction with the Department of Public Works (DPW), support local Vector Control organizations to investigate and clear open water ways that harbor mosquito breeding; 2) fully implement the planned West Nile virus awareness and surveillance program by working cooperatively with the mosquito and vector control districts, the State, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and 3) work with local vector control districts to add coverage in the unincorporated areas.

Background

In 2001, in an effort to develop a strategy to combat the virus as it advanced across the county, the West Nile Virus Task Force was formed. Key members include representatives from all districts within the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego, as well as the California Department of Public Health and DPH. The districts work very closely with each other and have regular meetings where pertinent issues are discussed.

Within Los Angeles County, the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (VCD), the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District (MVCD), the Los Angeles County West Vector Control District, and the Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District are responsible for monitoring and controlling mosquito populations, educating the public, and encouraging participation in the reduction of mosquito breeding habitats and disease risk reduction.

Clearing Of Open Water Ways to Prevent Mosquito Breeding

DPW continues to work closely with the Greater Los Angeles County VCD that vegetation is cleared in waterways within the district boundaries. VCD is aware that timing of vegetation removal is crucial to the success of the Plan as well as necessary in order to comply with California Department of Fish and Game requirements. To date, the pre-season reduction of vegetation has proven to be a successful approach.

Cooperative Efforts to Implement the Planned West Nile Virus Awareness and Surveillance Program

Outreach continues in the schools, through various media outlets, and at numerous community events. Communication lines between the districts and DPH remain strong, and information regarding issues that could affect the public's health is quickly disseminated, and all parties are notified prior to the issuance of news releases. When districts identify a "hot spot" for West Nile virus activity, they intensify control and surveillance as well as work closely with city officials to raise awareness through expanded media coverage, notifications, and community presentations. Pursuant to the motion, DPH is in the process of meeting with the districts to discuss any current or potential challenges as well as how to further enhance collaborative efforts.

The foreclosure crisis in Los Angeles County continues to significantly impact the daily operations of the districts, and detailed records are maintained that permit routine assessment and control of these breeding sites. Foreclosure lists are closely monitored to identify newly vacated properties with pools that may need to be added to routine treatment schedules. Additionally, helicopter surveillance of untended swimming pools continues to be a valuable tool utilized by the districts.

Coverage for Unincorporated Areas

Providing mosquito control services in unincorporated areas continues to be a major concern of the Task Force. The service agreement between DPH and the Antelope Valley MVCD for complaint coverage in the unincorporated areas of Agua Dulce, Acton, Lake Elizabeth, Lake Hughes, Leona Valley, Littlerock, Lake Los Angeles, and Pearblossom has again been negotiated and approved. The San Gabriel Valley MVCD continues to encourage the annexation of Baldwin Park, and the Greater Los Angeles County VCD continues to work with the city of La Canada-Flintridge to renew contract services as they explore their service options and possible annexation into the District.

Discovery of the Asian Tiger Mosquito

On September 2, 2011, *Aedes albopictus* (the Asian tiger mosquito) was discovered in a well within the jurisdictions of both the Greater Los Angeles County VCD and the San Gabriel Valley MVCD. This infestation has required the deployment of significant resources to provide sufficient staffing as well as critical public outreach through flyers, press releases, electronic billboards, community access channels, local and regional media outlets, social media, health fairs, and meetings with city councils, service groups, and schools.

This development has necessitated both districts to focus efforts on both West Nile virus activity and the Asian tiger mosquito infestation. As this time, the infestation zone for the Asian tiger mosquito overlaps the boundaries of both districts and appears to be confined to the South El Monte area. Dedicated crews from both districts as well as neighboring districts have worked to eradicate the mosquito from the area. To date, crews have been successful in their public outreach efforts, including going door-to-door, and have significantly reduced the number of positive sites where Asian tiger mosquito activity persists. Only 10% of the positive sites identified last fall still show signs of activity. In an effort to completely eradicate the species from Southern California, staff will continue to control and monitor mosquito activity as well as educate residents

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please let me know.

JEF:tp
PH:1207:002

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director of Public Works