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Dear Physician and Laboratory Director:

In early February 2013, a dead bird was found positive for West Nile virus (WNV) in Los Angeles County (LAC), marking the beginning of the 2013 WNV season. As recently as the end of May and early June, WNV infection has been found in dead birds and mosquito pools in the South Bay and a sentinel chicken in the Antelope Valley. In 2012, LAC recorded its second highest number of human infections since WNV first appeared in LAC in 2003. Statewide, 471 human infections were reported in 31 counties. Nationally, the number of WNV infections reported, 5,387, was also the highest since 2003. The number of human WNV infections documented in LAC has ranged as high as 309 in 2004 to as low as 4 in 2006 and 2010. The case reports you send to the Department of Public Health (DPH) guide our surveillance and health education activities and permit the mosquito abatement districts to target their control services. We request your continued participation in the reporting of human WNV infections.

The Acute Communicable Disease Control Program (ACDC) **recommends that physicians order a WNV results for all patients with aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or acute flaccid paralysis**, as well as for those who are experiencing a nonspecific illness compatible with **WNV fever** (an acute infection characterized by headache, fever, muscle pain, and/or rash lasting three days or longer) during the WNV season, late spring through November in California.

California regulations require physicians and laboratories to report all positive laboratory test for WNV and any other arbovirus infection to the patient's local public health department within one working day (California Code of Regulations, sections 2500 and 2505). WNV fever, WNV neuroinvasive disease (meningitis, encephalitis, and acute flaccid paralysis), and asymptomatic WNV positive blood donors are reportable. In addition, all cases of acute encephalitis and meningitis (including those pending definitive diagnosis or suspected to be of viral, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic etiologies) are reportable. A Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) (available at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/reports/cmr-h-794.pdf>) can be used to file a report; the CMR may be faxed to the DPH Morbidity Unit at (888) 397-3778. You may also report cases by telephone during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to (888) 397-3993.

Serologic testing for WNV antibodies, IgG and IgM, is the preferred diagnostic test for all forms of symptomatic WNV infection. Tests performed by clinical laboratories do not require confirmation by the LAC Public Health Laboratory (PHL). Excellent correlation has been shown between such results and subsequent tests conducted by Public Health.



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From May through November, the LAC PHL will perform screening tests and confirmation of ambiguous results on serum specimens at no charge to the submitter. A standard laboratory submittal form (<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lab/docs/H-3021%20Test%20Request%20Form.pdf>) that must be completed and accompany the specimen(s) is enclosed. The PHL accepts serum specimens for WNV testing on patients hospitalized or evaluated in an emergency department with aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or acute flaccid paralysis syndrome (atypical Guillain-Barré syndrome); outpatients with possible WNV fever may also be tested. Prior approval from ACDC physicians is not required for WNV testing. LAC PHL no longer tests cerebrospinal fluid CSF for WNV infection; CSF testing is available at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for diagnostic dilemmas. CSF specimens sent to LAC PHL will be forwarded to CDPH for testing when indicated.

The DPH provides updated information and surveillance reports to the medical community throughout the summer and fall at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/VectorWestNile.htm>. Additionally, we encourage medical providers to sign up for *Rx for Prevention*, the public health newsletter, at <https://admin.publichealth.lacounty.gov/phcommon/public/listserv/index.cfm?ou=ph>.

For medical consultation regarding WNV infection in humans, WNV surveillance activities, and test interpretation, contact ACDC at (213) 240-7941 during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or ask for the physician on call. Critical after-hours consultation is available by contacting doctor on call at (213) 974-1234. Public Health looks forward to working with clinicians and laboratories in our WNV surveillance efforts.

Sincerely,

Laurene Mascola, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.
Chief, Acute Communicable Disease Control Program
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

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Attachment

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