

How to Collect Dead Birds and Tree Squirrels for West Nile Virus (WNV) Testing

Thank you for helping us to monitor Los Angeles County for West Nile Virus!



Never touch a dead animal directly with your bare hands, and always wash your hands well after handling it. We will contact you with the results of tests performed on the dead bird or tree squirrel that you report.

Report all dead birds and tree squirrels in Los Angeles County. These are the types of animals that can be routinely tested for WNV. Tree squirrels are squirrels that run in trees.

All Reports are Helpful. Not all dead birds and tree squirrels can be tested for disease, but all reports are helpful. Please report the location, date, number of dead animals, and type of birds/squirrels.

Only freshly dead, adult birds and tree squirrels can be tested for WNV. Tests for WNV will be performed on adult birds/squirrels that have been dead a short time (24 hours or less), and that are not rotten or covered with ants. Baby birds will not be tested. Single pigeons or doves usually are not tested. In general, WNV tests are run on all birds that are collected. Testing for other diseases may only be done where there is a cluster of three or more dead birds or squirrels.

How to prepare dead bird or tree squirrel for testing.

1. **Note address or intersection** where bird/squirrel was found.
2. **Is it fresh?** Look at bird/squirrel without touching it. A freshly dead animal will have almost no odor, no ants or maggots, and will not be dried up.
3. **Put in bag.** Do not touch the dead bird/squirrel with your bare hands. Use disposable gloves or place a plastic bag (without holes) over your hand. Turn the bag inside out over the bird and then tie the bag closed. Double bag it this way.
 - If the bird/squirrel was NOT good for testing – discard in outdoor trash container and skip to #7.
 - If the bird WAS fresh and good for testing, follow all the steps below.
4. **Keep dead bird/squirrel cool.** If possible, keep the dead bird cool by placing a separate, sealed bag of ice on top of the bird. Do not let ice melt directly onto the bird. Put both the bagged bird and bag of ice in a third plastic bag.
5. **Place where our staff can find it.** Place the bagged bird in a shady accessible location (such as on a porch) and tell us where to find it.
6. **Note.** If possible, tape a note on the outer bag saying: “FOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT.”
7. **Wash hands** well with soap and water right after handling the bird.
8. **Report** the dead bird/squirrel to one of these two numbers, even if it was not fresh enough:
 - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at **213-989-7060**, or
 - California State Dead Bird Hotline at **877-WNV-BIRD**.

