



Keith Winkler, REHS  
Director of Public Health Services

Milton Teske, M. D.  
Health Officer

Debbie J. Grice, BSN, MPA  
Deputy Health Director Nursing & Community Services

Jeff Taber, MPH, REHS  
Deputy Health Director Environmental Health Services

330 Campus Drive - Hanford, California 93230

Telephone: (559) 584-1401 Fax: (559) 582-7618

*Mission: To promote and protect the health and well-being of our community.*

*Vision: Optimal health for all*

## DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER St. Louis Encephalitis

September 26, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

I want to inform you that St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV) has been detected recently in Kings County. SLEV was detected Kern County earlier this year. Similar to West Nile virus (WNV), SLEV is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Mosquitoes are vectors of encephalitis viruses, including SLEV and WNV. In California, SLEV was commonly detected in mosquitoes prior to the introduction of WNV into 2003 but seemingly disappeared thereafter and was not detected again until 2015 in Riverside County, CA. Also in 2015, an SLEV outbreak occurred in Arizona, with 19 human cases reported, suggestive that the virus may be re-emerging in the southwestern United States. In Kings County, detection of SLEV in mosquitoes is the first since around the 1990s.

St. Louis encephalitis is a rare infectious disease similar in presentation to WNV disease. Most people who are infected with SLEV have no symptoms or only mild non-specific flu-like illness. However in some individuals, especially the elderly, SLEV can cause severe neurologic illness similar to WNV. Symptoms of severe disease include fever, headache, stiff neck, disorientation, and altered level of consciousness. Treatment is supportive.

For patients with suspected WNV, please consider SLEV in your differential diagnosis. Encephalitis and meningitis conditions are currently reportable through our surveillance system, but given the detection of SLEV in local mosquito pools, we would also appreciate being notified of non-neuroinvasive SLEV cases to assist surveillance efforts.

If clinically indicated, order WNV testing – specimens will be sent to public health lab for testing for WNV/SLEV.

Additional information regarding SLEV and WNV may be referenced here:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/StLouisEncephalitisFactSheet.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/sle/index.html>

Please feel free to call or email me or my staff.

(559) 852-2876

Sincerely,

Milton Teske, M.D.  
Health Officer