

Letters, The Davis Enterprise, July 8, 2007

Faith-based vector control?

District Manager David Brown's statement at the Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District's open house "If adult mosquitoes become a problem, something has to be done to protect people" (Enterprise, June 24) focuses on what is fundamentally wrong with the district's program to spray poison on people in urban areas.

If there is a considerable threat from a "problem" and an effective means of dealing with it, how can we disagree? However, the odds of getting seriously ill from West Nile virus are extremely small, and the district has no way to slow its transmission by killing adult mosquitoes.

We are far more at risk of getting other serious diseases than West Nile encephalitis. If Brown's allies in the lobby of which he is president, the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California, are genuinely concerned about public health and saving lives, why not instead spend the adulticide money on flu shots?

Flu and pneumonia kill more than 7,000 Californians each year, as compared to the very few who die infected with West Nile virus (seven in 2006). One answer seems clear – no money for the mosquito lobby.

If it really were true that something must be done to protect people from adult mosquitoes, why take measures that are totally ineffective at slowing WNV transmission? The assumption that spraying adulticides "works" underlies most discussions, but in spite of repeated requests, officials have offered a feeble collection of unscientific reports as "evidence," and important parameters suggest that their protocol cannot work.

We might as well spray cities with Evian water each time a mosquito district threshold is reached – this would be equally effective at protecting us from WNV as is spraying adulticides, and officials could be seen as "doing something." But, the huge advantage of the Evian mist would be that there would be zero risk of causing cancer, nervous system disorders, endocrine disruption, or other maladies. It likely also would waste less taxpayer money.

Can any question remain whether the district's adulticiding program, lacking any scientific or logical basis, is being done for any reason other than public relations? We must demand much more from public officials than faith-based vector control.

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Stop West Nile Spraying Now

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