



Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District

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PRESS RELEASE

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FIGHTING THE BITE FOR 90 YEARS! COME CELEBRATE WITH A 5K AND A CAKE!

“Fight the Bite” 5K on March 24 to raise awareness about mosquito threats in the Valley

INDIO, CA, MARCH 9, 2018: The Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District is hosting its 3rd annual **“Fight the Bite 5K”** to raise awareness about threats to Coachella Valley residents from mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases. The race is **Saturday, March 24, 2018 at 8 a.m.** at the Rancho Mirage Community Park, 71-560 San Jacinto Drive, Rancho Mirage. Register online at www.cvmvcd.org/fightthebite5k.

This year also marks the District’s 90th birthday and we’ll be celebrating with a cake and balloons in the park immediately following the 5K. Established March 12, 1928 with a single employee to protect Coachella Valley residents from eye gnat infestations, the District has expanded its services to include 58 staff carrying out mosquito surveillance and control, a Red Imported Fire Ant program, and assisting residents with rats and flies through inspections and information on habitat reduction and exclusion from homes.

“Mosquito-transmitted diseases are no fun, but you can have a lot of fun learning how to prevent mosquitoes and the viruses they carry,” said Jill Oviatt, District Public Information Manager. “The goal of the 5K is to raise awareness about the real threats mosquitoes pose to Valley residents and to celebrate our birthday with cake and balloons.”

Coachella Valley residents are fortunate that there are few natural water sources in the desert for mosquitoes to reproduce. If people make mosquito prevention a weekly routine by dumping and draining standing water from containers in the yard, we can dramatically reduce or even eliminate some mosquito species from our neighborhoods.

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The “**Fight the Bite 5K**” is for serious runners and casual walkers and is all terrain stroller- and dog-friendly. The race will be professionally timed and popular radio broadcaster Bill Feingold of K-News will award prizes to the top three male and female finishers, as well as medals for the top three males and females in 10 age groups. Everyone who crosses the finish line gets a participant medal!

A Community Resource Fair will be hosted in the park from 8-11 a.m., with free face painting, balloon twisting, interactive games, goodies, birthday cake, balloons and education materials on mosquito prevention and protection, as well as other city, county, and community services.

“This event helps educate people in the Valley how to protect themselves from viruses transmitted by local mosquitoes, as well as invasive day-biting mosquitoes detected in the Valley in 2016 which have now spread to seven out of our nine Valley cities,” Oviatt said. “We are working non-stop to reduce these invasive mosquitoes but we need the community’s help, now more than ever.”

In the last 15 years more than 6,500 people in California became ill with West Nile virus (WNV). Of those, nearly 300 died. WNV and St. Louis encephalitis are common causes of encephalitis in the United States and are transmitted to humans via the bite of an infected mosquito. *Aedes aegypti* are an invasive mosquito species detected in seven Coachella Valley cities (Coachella, Cathedral City, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, and Palm Springs) and in Mecca. They are capable of transmitting deadly viruses such as chikungunya, dengue, and Zika. While these viruses are not currently being transmitted by mosquitoes locally in the Coachella Valley, local transmission could begin if someone infected abroad traveled to the desert and was then bitten by a local *Ae. aegypti*.

Prevent mosquitoes in your yard:

- Inspect yards for standing water sources and drain water that may have collected under potted plants, in bird baths, discarded tires, and any other items that could collect water.
- Clean and scrub bird baths and pet watering dishes weekly.
- Check and clean any new potted plant containers that you may bring home from areas that may have invasive *Aedes*. The mosquito eggs can remain viable in dry areas for months.

Prevent mosquito bites:

- Apply repellents containing EPA registered ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 to exposed skin and/or clothing (as directed on the product label).
- Wear long sleeve shirts, pants, socks and shoes when mosquitoes are most active and repair any damaged window and door screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

Report stagnant water sources, mosquito problems, and dead birds to CVMVCD at (760) 342-8287, (888) 343-9399, or cvmosquito@cvmvcd.org. You can also learn more about West Nile virus, invasive mosquitoes, and other vectors at www.cvmvcd.org.

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Fun Facts about Fighting the Bite for 90 Years in the Coachella Valley



1 employee worked at the District office in Thermal in 1928 when the District was established.



58 fulltime employees service the Valley from our Indio office in 2018.

2 months is how long schools were shut down in 1927 because of a “pink eye” outbreak in the Coachella Valley. The District was initially established to control eye gnats which transmit bacteria that can cause the condition.

122-mile Coachella Canal brought a new source of water to Coachella Valley residents in 1949 along with new sources for mosquito breeding.

1951 the District added a Mosquito Control Department to address the new mosquito threats.

25 surveillance traps were used to protect public health in 1978.

254 surveillance traps are being deployed to track mosquito populations and virus activity in 2018.

6 million mosquitoes have been collected in District traps since 1982.

508,470 mosquitoes were captured by District traps in 2017.

15 mosquito species have been detected in the Coachella Valley, though we regularly collect 13 species in our traps every year.

133,027 mosquito control applications were made since 2009 in urban and rural areas of the Valley.

1995 the Board of Trustees voted to expand to a full vector control agency – the Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District.

2005 the District added the Red Imported Fire Ant Program in response to invasive ant infestations causing residents pain and suffering.

43,202 Mosquito samples from the Coachella Valley have been tested in District or State Laboratories since 2002. Of those, **1,125** tested positive for West Nile virus, **155** tested positive for St. Louis encephalitis, and **18** tested positive for western equine encephalitis.

34 Coachella Valley residents are known to have contracted West Nile Virus since 2004.