

# West Nile Virus Hits Close to Home

Sheldon Dingle, Alhambra, California

About a week ago while walking my old dog, Igor, to the vet's office, we noticed a dead crow in the gutter near the clinic. Igor took a quick look and ignored the crashed and collapsed crow. I stooped over the defunct bird and almost fetched it up to deliver to the vet — but better judgment prevailed and the crow remained ensconced in its gutter niche.

I mentioned the bird to our vet and he thanked me profusely for letting the bird rest in peace.

A few days later I read a local newspaper story from which I loosely extrapolate:

*"With more than 200 birds in California felled by West Nile virus, public health officials will no longer pick up and dispose of the dead animals in some communities. Arcadia and West Covina top the list of local cities with the most documented cases of the disease, transmitted by the bite of infected mosquitoes.*

*This is a new virus to the United States, so there's no natural immunity in bird populations or in people.*

*Meanwhile, residents should throw away any dead birds they find, being careful to pick them up with rubber or latex gloves, or a plastic bag. Dead birds left in the open aren't a danger, and won't perpetuate the infection. People cannot get infected from disposing of dead birds."*

Aviculturists keeping birds in the San Gabriel Valley would be well advised to screen their aviaries to keep the pesky and now deadly-to-birds little mosquitoes out.

For many years I have fought my own battle with the buzzing little beasts but still come down with debilitating fevers several times per year. I think they are winning. ❖

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