



DATE: March 26, 2025

TO: Southern Nevada District Board of Health Members

FROM: Cassius Lockett, PhD, District Health Officer 

SUBJECT: District Health Officer Report

Mosquito Surveillance

The Southern Nevada Health District has begun routine mosquito surveillance activities approximately one month earlier than usual in response to warmer-than-average temperatures and recent rainfall across Clark County.

Environmental Health staff have started setting mosquito traps throughout the Las Vegas valley as part of the Health District's Mosquito Disease Surveillance Program. Early surveillance allows public health officials to closely monitor mosquito populations, identify species present in the community and detect signs of mosquito-borne viruses before peak mosquito season. Traps are placed in parks, wash channels, wetlands, residential neighborhoods and other potential breeding sites. Mosquitoes collected in the field are transported to a laboratory at the Health District's Main Public Health Center, where they are sorted and cataloged by species and location. Samples are then sent to the Southern Nevada Public Health Laboratory to test for arboviruses, including West Nile virus.

While activity has fluctuated in recent years, surveillance remains an essential public health tool to detect virus activity and guide response efforts. In 2024, 12 non-neuroinvasive cases and 14 neuroinvasive cases of West Nile virus were reported in Clark County. In 2025, no human cases of West Nile virus were reported in Clark County.

Because early-season conditions are favorable for mosquito development, the Health District is urging residents to take precautions now, particularly against *Aedes aegypti*, an invasive mosquito species capable of transmitting viruses such as Zika, dengue, yellow fever and chikungunya. Unlike most mosquitoes, *Aedes aegypti* are aggressive daytime biters that prefer feeding on people. They breed in small containers that collect rain or irrigation water, including plant saucers, buckets, children's toys and even bottle caps.

The Health District's Fight the Bite campaign encourages residents to:

- Eliminate standing water around their homes
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent and wear protective clothing
- Report mosquito activity to the Health District's surveillance program at (702) 759-1633
- Report green pools to their local code enforcement agency

Additional resources and prevention tips are available at www.snhd.info/mosquito

Community Drug Surveillance Program

In February, the Health District announced it had identified medetomidine—a veterinary sedative also known as “rhino tranquilizer”—in the local illicit drug supply through its community drug surveillance program, which anonymously samples used drug paraphernalia. While medetomidine use has not been widely reported in Nevada, the Health District has confirmed five positive samples since July 1, 2025, representing less than 1% of all samples collected since September 2024.

Medetomidine is a veterinary sedative, similar to xylazine (“tranq”), that is 100 to 200 times more potent than xylazine and can cause longer-lasting sedation, low heart rate and more severe withdrawal symptoms. It is not an opioid but has been found in the local illicit drug supply, most often in combination with fentanyl.

Clark County overdose surveillance data from September 2024 to August 2025 indicate a 50% increase in fentanyl deaths (from 0.8 deaths per 100,000 population to 1.2 deaths per 100,000) and an increase of almost 42% in methamphetamine-involved deaths (from 1.08 per 100,000 population to 1.53 per 100,000). Thus far, medetomidine has not been implicated in any overdose deaths in Clark County.

Symptoms and overdose

Medetomidine primarily causes profound sedation but may also lead to low blood pressure, slowed heart rate, dizziness, extreme fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, blurred vision and confusion. Because of its strong sedative effects, a person who has overdosed on a drug containing medetomidine may remain sedated and unresponsive after naloxone is administered, even if the opioid component of the overdose is successfully reversed. When responding to a suspected overdose, it is critical to prioritize breathing over responsiveness by ensuring the person takes at least one breath every five seconds and does not appear pale, gray or blue. It is also essential to call 9-1-1 immediately.

Overdose prevention practices can help prevent overdose deaths. The Health District currently provides test strips for both fentanyl and xylazine without a prescription at the pharmacy at its Main Public Health Center located at 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107. Additional distribution locations for test strips can be found at [Substance Use Dashboard](#).

Medetomidine is not an opioid, and naloxone (Narcan®) will not reverse the effects of a medetomidine overdose. However, as medetomidine is found in substance mixtures containing fentanyl, it is important to use overdose response protocol. Call 9-1-1 for further medical evaluation and administer naloxone in response to any suspected overdose to reverse possible opioid effects.

More tips on overdose response are available at [6 Things to Know about Overdose Response](#). To learn more about medetomidine, go to [Medetomidine Fast Facts](#). People who are using substances, or their loved ones, can obtain more information about support and resources from the Health District Post Overdose Team [website](#).

Alzheimer’s Association Healthy Brain Initiative

The Health District has been selected by the Alzheimer’s Association to participate in a national initiative designed to help communities better understand, prevent and respond to Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. The Health District is one of only 16 local health departments and tribal health organizations nationwide selected through a competitive application process. The selection places the Health District in the 2026 cohort of the Alzheimer’s Association’s Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map Strategist and Champion Programs. Over the past four years, the

programs have supported more than 50 health departments and tribal organizations nationwide. Southern Nevada now joins a small group of communities working to bring brain health and dementia beyond the doctor's office and into everyday public health practice—similar to long-standing efforts focused on heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

The program provides funding, training and technical assistance to help health departments address dementia at the community level. Over the next year, the Health District will focus on building partnerships, increasing public awareness, and developing local strategies that support brain health across Southern Nevada.

What this means

According to the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 10.9% of adults 65 and older in Clark County—approximately 39,300 people—are living with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's and other dementias affect not only individuals and families, but entire communities. As the population ages, more Southern Nevada residents are experiencing memory loss, confusion and other cognitive challenges, while thousands of family members and friends provide care.

The Healthy Brain Initiative treats dementia as a public health issue, not solely a medical one. This approach emphasizes prevention, education, early detection and support systems, long before someone requires full-time care.

Through the initiative, the Health District will work to:

- Help residents understand what brain health is and why it matters
- Promote behaviors that may reduce the risk of cognitive decline, such as managing chronic conditions, staying socially connected and maintaining physical activity
- Improve access to information about dementia and available community resources
- Support caregivers, who often experience stress, burnout and health challenges of their own
- Strengthen coordination among health care providers, community organizations and local leaders

Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, the initiative emphasizes community-driven strategies, allowing the Health District to tailor efforts to the unique needs, cultures and demographics of Southern Nevada.

A national effort with local impact

Participating organizations designate a public health professional to serve as a Strategist or Champion, leading local efforts to integrate dementia into public health planning. These leaders assess community needs, build partnerships and develop action plans using the Alzheimer's Association's Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map Series, a nationally recognized framework for addressing brain health and dementia.

For Southern Nevada, this means aligning local data, existing programs and community input to better prepare for the growing impact of dementia, particularly as the region's older adult population continues to increase.

Why this matters for Southern Nevada

By participating in the Healthy Brain Initiative, the Health District aims to:

- Increase public awareness so residents recognize when memory changes may be a cause for concern

- Reduce stigma surrounding dementia and cognitive impairment
- Encourage earlier conversations among patients, families and health care providers
- Improve coordination among agencies serving older adults and caregivers

This work also helps ensure dementia-related planning is integrated into broader public health efforts—from emergency preparedness to chronic disease prevention—rather than addressed in isolation. Additional information about Alzheimer’s and dementia is available at [Alzheimer’s and dementia | National Institute on Aging](#).

Pop-Up Produce Stands

Pop-Up Produce Stands have returned to the Bonneville Transit Center (BTC), offering affordable, regionally grown fruits and vegetables to the community. Shoppers can use SNAP/EBT, cash, debit or credit cards. Double Up Food Bucks, a nutrition incentive program for SNAP users are offered, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons are also accepted when available.

The stands are open from noon to 3 p.m., or while supplies last, at the BTC, 101 E. Bonneville Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89101. Upcoming dates are:

- Tuesday, March 3
- Tuesday, March 10
- Tuesday, April 7
- Tuesday, April 14
- Tuesday, May 5
- Tuesday, May 12

The produce stands are a partnership of the Southern Nevada Health District’s Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada and Prevail Marketplace. In addition to fresh produce, shoppers receive nutrition education and other health resources. The Division of Social Services will be in attendance at select pop-up events to assist participants with benefits and resources.

The program aims to improve access to healthy food and reduce food insecurity in Southern Nevada. In 2023, Clark County’s food insecurity rate was 16%, affecting 366,710 people—higher than both Nevada (15.1%) and the United States (14.3%). More than one in five children in Clark County, equivalent to 111,180 children (22%), experienced food insecurity. Rates among Black residents (28%) were more than double those of White residents (13%), underscoring significant disparities. In 2019, the U.S. Department of Agriculture identified 30 census tracts in Clark County as food deserts, highlighting persistent barriers to healthy food access.

In 2025, the stands distributed 1,113 pounds of fresh produce. About 44% of sales were made using SNAP/EBT benefits, demonstrating the program’s role in improving healthy food access for families who may be experiencing barriers to accessing healthy foods.

For more information, call the Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at (702) 759-1270 or visit the [Get Healthy Clark County Farmers Markets](#) page. The website also lists local farmers markets, including those that accept EBT, SNAP and debit or credit cards.

Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program

The Health District’s Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion invited Clark County residents to participate in the YMCA’s Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program, offered by

the YMCA of Southern Nevada. The 16-week program aims to help people reduce and manage their blood pressure over time. It is designed for people who have high blood pressure or may be at risk of developing it.

About 34.6% of adults in Clark County have high blood pressure, which is slightly higher than the state average of 33.9%. High blood pressure is more prevalent among men than women. In 2023, non-Hispanic Black/African American adults had Clark County's highest rate of hypertension, at more than 41%. Nationally, more than 47% of U.S. adults have high blood pressure.

Among other things, the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring program addresses certain everyday factors—such as high sodium intake, chronic stress, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol use and underlying conditions like obesity or diabetes—that can trigger spikes in blood pressure. These triggers make regular monitoring and healthy lifestyle choices essential for prevention and control. The program also includes monthly nutrition seminars to help people improve their knowledge of heart-healthy eating habits.

Those who qualified for the program receive a free YMCA membership with access to any of its three Las Vegas-area locations throughout the duration of the program. The English cohort meets from 11 a.m. to noon on Mondays, March 9 through June 15, at the Durango Hills YMCA, 3521 North Durango Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89129. To learn more about the qualification guidelines, email Courtney Taber at ctaber@lasvegasyymca.org or call (702) 522-7370.

The Spanish cohort meets Tuesdays from 5 to 6 p.m. starting March 24 through July 7 at the Bill and Lillie Heinrich YMCA, 4141 Meadows Ln., Las Vegas, NV 89107. Healthy Heart Ambassadors—certified blood pressure monitoring health coaches—are offering one-on-one consultations for the duration of the cohort. For more information, email Janu Herrera at jherrera@lasvegasyymca.org.

Influenza Update

As of February 21, 890 influenza-associated hospitalizations and 27 deaths have been reported in Clark County. The percentage of emergency department and urgent care visits for influenza-like illness (ILI—defined as a fever of 100°F or greater and a cough and/or sore throat) decreased from 3.7% in week 6 to 3.2% in week 7.

Influenza A has been the predominant influenza type detected among hospitalized cases in Clark County. During week 7, 4.4% of outpatient visits reported nationally through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to respiratory illness, including ILI. This percentage is above the national baseline of 3.1%.

The Health District's Influenza Snapshot and Influenza Report by Age Group are available weekly at www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/news-info/statistics-surveillance-reports/influenza-surveillance/.

Community Meetings

Week ending 03/01:

Biweekly:

- Facilitated one-on-one meetings with Direct Reports

Monthly:

- Participated in the individual Southern Nevada District Board of Health Agenda Review meetings with Councilwoman Brune, Commissioner Becker, Bobbette Bond, Councilwoman Larson, Mayor Hardy
- Participated in the Southern Nevada District Board of Health meeting

Professional Development/Conferences:

- Attended the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) Members Meeting

Week ending 02/22:

Biweekly:

- Facilitated the Health Executive Council meeting
- Facilitated one-on-one meetings with Direct Reports
- Participated in the EIS Bi-weekly Check-in meeting

Monthly:

- Participated in the Southern Nevada Community Health Center Governing Board meeting
- Participated in the individual Southern Nevada District Board of Health Agenda Review meetings with Mayor Pro Tem Scott Black
- Participated in the individual Southern Nevada District Board of Health Agenda Review meetings with Mayor Pro Tem Gallo and Scott Nielson

Ad-hoc Meetings:

- Participated in a meeting regarding the status of birth Hep B vaccinations
- Participated in an internal meeting regarding Medicaid administrative claiming and Medicaid administrative activities

Week ending 02/15:

Biweekly:

- Participated in a meeting regarding the lab expansion
- Facilitated one-on-one meetings with Direct Reports
- Participated in the Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Update meeting

Monthly:

- Participated in the BCHC Monthly Member meeting

Quarterly:

- Participated in the EIS Supervisory Team meeting

Ad-hoc Meetings:

- Participated in a meeting regarding C. auris numbers and positivity rates
- Participated in a meeting regarding bio-watch and SNPHL
- Participated in a Political Affairs Committee at the Greater of Las Vegas Association of Realtors Office
- Participated in a meeting regarding the CHIP/CHA
- Participated in a meeting regarding Child Haven

Week ending 02/08:

Biweekly:

- Facilitated the Health Executive Council meeting
- Facilitated one-on-one meetings with Direct Reports
- Participated in the EIS Bi-weekly Check-in meeting

Monthly:

- Participated in the Disease Surveillance & Control Division leadership meeting
- Participated in the Monthly Leadership Finance meeting

Bi-monthly:

- Participated in the Informatics Department leadership meeting

Quarterly:

- Participated in the Community Health Division leadership meeting
- Participated in the Lab Test Pricing Check-in

Ad-hoc Meetings:

- Participated in a meeting with Dr. Luis Medina regarding ID Fellowship at SNHD
- Participated in an internal meeting regarding shadow billing
- Participated in an internal meeting regarding the state public health fund
- Participated in a meeting regarding the Regional Trauma Advisory Board nomination process
- Participated in an internal meeting regarding Medicaid administrative claiming and Medicaid administrative activities