

NEWS CLIPS

NO SIGN OF WEST NILE VIRUS IN NEW YORK CITY

NEW YORK (AP) — A chicken tested for the deadly West Nile virus showed no sign of the disease, scuttling plans to begin pesticide spraying in the borough of Queens, officials said Saturday. "At this time, we do not have evidence of the West Nile virus in New York City," said city Health Commissioner Dr. Neal Cohen. Testing was done by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Veterinary Laboratory. Cohen's announcement comes two days after a preliminary test indicated the presence of the virus in the chicken, raising fears that the disease could linger through the summer. Last year, the virus killed six people and infected 62 others in the metropolitan area. Four of those deaths and 45 of the illnesses occurred in the city — most in northwest Queens. The results mean that plans for the city to begin pesticide spraying in Queens have been canceled. Spraying will occur only if the virus re-appears. The health department is monitoring the chicken in the Corona section of Queens. The sentinel chickens, which serve as the early warning system against West Nile, are not killed by the virus.

RAPPER NATE DOGG ARRESTED, BAIL SET \$1 MILLION

POMONA, Calif. (AP) — Rapper Nate Dogg was arrested Saturday for investigation of kidnapping his former girlfriend and torching a car. The 30-year-old rapper, whose real name is Nathaniel Dwayne Hale, was arrested by a SWAT team at about 12:30 p.m. at his Pomona home, said Sgt. Norine Plett, a sheriff's spokeswoman. He was booked for investigation of kidnapping, making terrorist threats, domestic violence and arson and was held in lieu of \$1 million bail, Plett said. Hale allegedly held his girlfriend against her will at a home in Lakewood, assaulted her and set her mother's car on fire. The girlfriend, identified only as Rhoda, told KABC-TV that she had broken up with Hale several days earlier. Hale got his start with rappers Snoop Dogg and Warren G in a Long Beach-area band. He later recorded with Dr. Dre on "The Chronic" and appeared on Snoop Dogg's "Doggystyle." Hale, Snoop Dogg and other rappers are part of the current "Up in Smoke" concert tour.

CHARLES DONATES \$2 MILLION TO BLACK UNIVERSITY

WILBERFORCE, Ohio (AP) — It's music to their ears: Students at Wilberforce University will benefit from a \$2 million gift from Ray Charles to fund entertainment scholarships and pay visiting artists. It is the largest single gift in the history of the private, historically black university. Charles' gift was made through the Ray Charles Robinson Foundation for Hearing Disorders. The money will be used to set up a scholarship fund for students studying music, dance, theater and voice, and to establish a chair in which musicians, artists and scholars come to the school and serve as temporary lecturers. Charles' career has covered rhythm and blues, jazz, rock, gospel and country. He visited Wilberforce in December to receive an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree. "I was impressed on my campus visit with the quality of the students and the faculty, and I knew the rich history of Wilberforce," said Charles. "In my small way, I wanted to be part of this great history." Wilberforce, which has about 1,000 students, is about 15 miles east of Dayton.

BARDOT CONVICTED FOR ANTI-MUSLIM COMMENT

PARIS (AP) — A French court last Thursday convicted French actress and animal activist Brigitte Bardot of inciting "discrimination, hatred or racial violence" after she criticized a Muslim festival in which sheep are slaughtered. Bardot also was fined \$3,000 for a chapter in a book published in 1999 in which she lamented that "my country, France, my homeland, my land is again invaded by an overpopulation of foreigners, especially Muslims." In the book, "Pluto's Square," she criticized the Muslim practice of killing sheep for Aid-el-Kebir, a Muslim celebration marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. The Movement Against Racism and for Friendship Among People had filed the suit against Bardot. Bardot was previously convicted for similar remarks made in 1996.

Black farmers spur House debate

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republican Conference Chairman J.C. Watts is vowing to reintroduce a resolution calling for speedier payments to black farmers and wants the support of Democratic black lawmakers.

"America's black farmers deserve our united support," Watts of Oklahoma and the only black Republican in Congress said as he was surrounded by about 60 black farmers, mostly from his home state.

"We must reject those who attempt to play politics with their plight for purely political gain."

Still, the fight over a resolution that has no legal authority has been mired in par-

tisan politics. The measure, which would call on the federal government to speed payments to black farmers in a discrimination lawsuit against the Agriculture Department, failed in the House last month.

At that time, black lawmakers accused its sponsor, Rep. Jay Dickey, R-Ark., of playing politics and trying to curry favor with blacks for his re-election bid. Congressional Black Caucus Chairman James Clyburn of South Carolina said then, "Once you get past the smoke and mirrors, this resolution does nothing."

Dickey angered black farmers in his district in January when, after being approached by a group of farm-

ers for help in getting their settlement payments, he told them it would be difficult to support them when they refused to support him politically. He later apologized.

Monday, the four-term congressman denied that his sponsorship of the measure was motivated by political gain. "We should give our attention to the plight of the black farmers. I am not trying to capitalize on this problem."

Dickey is running in a heavily Democratic district against state Sen. Mike Ross. With an electorate that is 27 percent black, Dickey's district is Arkansas' largest black voter population.

He is the first Republican elected to the seat.

The Agriculture Department last year reached a settlement that is expected to spend millions of dollars paying black farmers who were discriminated against when applying for loans and subsidy programs.

Farmers have complained that payments have been slow and many claims have been denied.

Many farmers, carrying signs saying "We Represent Black Voters," said they want their money and care little about the partisan fight.

"We're going to support folks who support us, bottom line," said Jeff Hawkins, a farmer from Warrenton, N.C. "Right now the black caucus is not supporting us as we feel they should."

Supreme Court limits death penalty appeals

WASHINGTON (AP) — A sharply divided Supreme Court made it harder for some convicted killers to challenge their death sentences in federal court.

By a 5-4 vote last week, the justices upheld Virginia killer Bobby Lee Ramdass' death sentence even though he was barred from telling jurors he would be ineligible for parole if sentenced to life in prison.

The court's four dissenters said the decision condones "an acute unfairness."

The ruling clarified the court's 1994 decision that said defendants have the right to tell jurors about their ineligibility for parole whenever prosecutors urge jurors to impose a death sentence based on "future dangerousness."

During a weeklong crime spree in 1992, Ramdass robbed two pizza restaurants and a convenience store in Fairfax County, Va. During one episode, he killed convenience store clerk Mohammed Kayani.

In separate trials, juries found him guilty of all three crimes. He was sentenced to death for the murder after a state court jury found he was "a continuing threat to society."

After all appeals were re-

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jected in state courts, Ramdass sought help in federal court. He argued that he wrongly was barred from telling jurors about his ineligibility for parole under Virginia's three-strikes law.

The Virginia Supreme Court had ruled that the three-strikes law did not apply to Ramdass when he was sentenced for the murder because he had not yet been sentenced for one of the three separate crimes for which he had been convicted. In other words, he technically had only two strikes.

A federal trial judge ruled that Ramdass was entitled to a new sentencing trial, but the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out that decision. The appeals court said federal courts are bound by state courts' characterization of the relevant state laws.

Monday, the Supreme Court said the 4th Circuit court was right.

In the court's main opinion, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy said federal courts could not help Ramdass because "the Virginia Supreme Court's decision to deny (him) relief was neither contrary to, nor an unreasonable

application, of" the Supreme Court's 1994 decision.

He was joined by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote separately but joined in the result.

Justices John Paul Stevens, David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer dissented.

"There is an acute unfairness in permitting a state to rely on a recent conviction to establish a defendant's future dangerousness while simultaneously permitting the state to deny that there was such a

conviction when the defendant attempts to argue that he is parole ineligible and therefore not a future danger," Stevens wrote for the four.

"Even the most miserly reading of the opinions in (the 1994 decision) supports the conclusion that (Ramdass) was denied one of the hallmarks of due process," Stevens said.

Kennedy, who in announcing the decision from the bench went into considerable detail about the cold-blooded manner in which Ramdass committed his murder, said the lack of a final judgment in a previous conviction was more than a formality.

The case is Ramdass vs. Angelone, 99-7000.

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