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Reducing The Mosquito Population Reduces The Risk Of West Nile Virus

By Becky Bartlett

EASTON - Lamont McClure and the Northampton County Vector Control program reminds residents that summer is the prime season for mosquito breeding and that mosquitoes can carry West Nile Virus (WNV), Zika and other diseases.

WNV was first detected in the U.S. in 1999 and affects birds, humans, horses and other mammals. There were nationwide epidemics of the virus in 2003 and 2012 and the key months for WNV transmission run from August into October. In humans, 80% of the cases are asymptomatic and 20% involve non-neuro-invasive illness. Less than 1% of cases result in conditions such as encephalitis which can cause paralysis and even death.

"Northampton County, takes its commitment to public health very seriously," says County Executive Lamont McClure. "West Nile can be a very dangerous disease and it is important that we prevent its transmission to humans by limiting opportunities for mosquitoes to breed."

Successful control of the mosquito population requires community effort. Homeowners should drain any source of standing water on their property, including turning over buckets and pools and tossing unnecessary items and trash. Toys, pots, cans, tire swings and plugged gutters make for excellent mosquito breeding habitats. Mosquitoes can breed in a space as small as a soda bottle cap.

In early spring, Field Technicians from the County's Vector Control program treat woodland ponds and past WNV positive breeding habitats. Larvicide agents typically don't harm non-target insects which may be present in the treated area.

Traps for mosquitoes are placed throughout the County in areas near standing water. They are emptied every day and sent for testing. Occasionally someone finds one of the mosquito traps. If so, we request that it be left undisturbed so our staff can continue to do its very important work. The traps are labelled: Do Not Disturb, Pa Dept. of Environmental Protection, Northampton County Vector Borne Disease Control Program, Mosquito Trap.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) tests mosquitos for the presence of WNV and other mosquito-borne diseases from May to October. Early control efforts focus on reducing mosquito breeding habitat. Spraying does not take place until a high enough percentage of positive mosquitoes indicates a threat to humans.

Residents who are concerned about large numbers of mosquitoes in their area can call 610-829-6424 or 610-391-9583 ext. 2995 for more information.



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