

NEWS

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Bob Martin, Commissioner

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CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS URGE RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST MOSQUITOES, TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST WEST NILE VIRUS

(12/P97) **TRENTON** –The Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Health are urging state residents to take precautions to protect themselves from mosquito-borne West Nile Virus by taking some simple steps to reduce populations of the insect on their own properties.

Late summer and early fall are typically the most critical times of the year to be aware of the potential for the dangers of contracting West Nile Virus from mosquito bites. Mosquito activity can continue until late October. Mosquitoes also can become more active throughout the entire day at this time of year.

Concerns are elevated this year because of increased mosquito activity due to weather conditions that have been ripe for mosquito breeding, and which could increase the risk of mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile virus.

"West Nile Virus cases tend to increase in late summer and fall and residents should take steps to prevent mosquito bites," said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd. "Residents should protect themselves by using repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants and avoiding the outdoors during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active."

Additional personal protection measures include:

- Maintaining screen doors and windows
- Using insect netting on infant carriers and strollers
- Taking action to limit mosquitoes on personal property

"The DEP's mosquito program coordinates and supplements the network of county mosquito agencies with an Integrated Pest Management approach that stresses multiple strategies beyond the application of pesticides," said Bob Kent, Administrator of the DEP's Office of Mosquito Control Coordination. "The surveillance and management of chronic mosquito producing sites continues on a year-round basis, and includes wetlands management and the introduction of biological control agents, such as mosquito eating fish and tiny crustaceans, or copepods."

The DEP offers the following tips on how to limit mosquitoes on your property:

- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that have accumulated on your property.
- Pay special attention to discarded tires that may have accumulated. The used tire has become the most important domestic mosquito producer in this country.
- Drill holes in the bottom and elevate recycling containers that are left out of doors.
- Clean clogged roof gutters on an annual basis, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. Roof gutters are easily overlooked but can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use. A wading pool becomes a mosquito producer if it is not used on a regular basis.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and do not allow water to stagnate in bird baths.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens are fashionable but become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools that are not being used. A swimming pool that is left untended can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes will develop in any puddle that lasts more than four days.
- Maintain mechanical barriers, such as window and door screens, to prevent mosquitoes from entering buildings. Barriers over rain barrels or cistern and septic pipes will deny female mosquitoes the opportunity to lay eggs on water.
- If you have problems controlling mosquitoes, contact your county mosquito control agency by calling 888-666-5968.

In recent weeks, the number of human West Nile cases identified in the United States has risen dramatically, with the nation experiencing the highest number of cases reported since 1999, when the virus was first detected in the United States. The majority of the 1,590 cases in 2012 to date have been reported from six states—Texas, Michigan, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and South Dakota. Nationally there have been 66 deaths. For more information on national cases visit CDC.gov.

DOH has identified eight human cases of West Nile Virus so far this year. They were in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties.

In 2010 there were 30 human cases in New Jersey, including two deaths. There were 7 human cases in 2011, with no fatalities.

In response to the increased number of mosquitoes, the State has stepped up its air surveillance of potential mosquito breeding grounds and aircraft pesticide applications to proactively reduce the threat of impacts to people. The state also has been working closely with county mosquito control programs and local health departments to help them identify and respond to mosquito outbreaks in a timely manner.

The majority of individuals infected with the virus will show no symptoms. Some people will have mild to moderate symptoms of West Nile fever, which may include fever, headache, rash, fatigue, nausea, vomiting and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms appear within 2 to 15 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito. Older adults and immune-compromised individuals are at higher risk of developing severe illness.

If a person thinks they may be infected, they should visit their health care provider for further evaluation and potential testing. There is no treatment for West Nile Virus, and mild to moderate infections usually resolve within 7 to 10 days. More severe infections may require hospitalization and supportive treatment.

For more DEP information visit: www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito
Visit the State Department of Health: www.state.nj.us/health/cd/westnile

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