

Charleston County News Release

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Charleston County Acknowledges National Mosquito Awareness Week June 24 – 30

Mosquito Control employees educate the public on ways to eliminate mosquitoes

Did you know that only the female mosquito bites? Did you know that South Carolina has native fish that eat mosquito larvae? Charleston County Government's Mosquito Control Division employees are teaching the public about these and many others facts, including how people can help get rid of the pests on their own.

The week of June 24 - 30 has been declared the Eighth Annual National Mosquito Control Awareness Week by the American Mosquito Control Association.

Charleston County Mosquito Control wants to use Mosquito Week as a time to educate citizens about the significance of mosquitoes in their daily lives and the important service provided by mosquito control workers.

During Mosquito Week, Charleston County staff will distribute brochures that will be available at the five main County libraries, and at James Island County Park, Palmetto Islands County Park, and Wannamaker County Park.

In an effort to reach out and educate people, inspectors will also hand out information packets to citizens at residences requesting mosquito control services.

"The information packet program gives us an excellent opportunity to talk with people in person and answer their questions and concerns," said Ed Harne, a taxonomist with Charleston County Mosquito Control. "We will give people information on the mosquito life cycle and tips on how to eliminate mosquito egg-laying sites around their homes in order to help reduce the number of mosquitoes in their own neighborhoods."

Each year, Charleston County Mosquito Control treats over 90,000 acres by aircraft and 500,000 acres through ground spraying.

"The first thing we need to know is where mosquitoes breed and how they live their life cycles," said Martin Hyatt, Charleston County Mosquito Control Superintendent. "The young mosquitoes, or larvae, cannot live and become adult mosquitoes without water. So the key for us is to get rid of the containers that hold water around our homes, yards and schools."

The public can help by flushing water out of birdbaths and pet dishes with a garden hose. Keep anything that has potential to hold water, like toys, buckets, cans and bottles, turned over and emptied.

Mosquitoes also grow and live in standing water in other types of areas, including ditches and low spots in yards, fields and woods. Because this standing water can't always be eliminated, Charleston County Mosquito Control routinely checks these types of areas for mosquito breeding.

"If there are mosquito larvae present, Mosquito Control workers will put a material into the water that kills only the larvae and does no harm to any other organism," Hyatt said.

In addition, small fish that eat mosquito larvae can be put into the water. These fish are native to South Carolina. If a particular area is large enough, Charleston County Mosquito Control will also use a helicopter, an airplane and sometimes a boat.

"All of these treatments will reduce the number of young aquatic stage mosquitoes, but there will still be some adult mosquitoes flying around," Hyatt said. For the adult mosquitoes, Charleston County Mosquito Control uses spray machines on trucks to spray at night. If the mosquito population is high enough and in a large area, an airplane will sometimes be used to spray for these adult mosquitoes.

Working together, Charleston County Mosquito Control and the citizens of Charleston County can reduce the mosquito population so that residents can continue to enjoy outside activities and minimize the occurrence of mosquito-carried disease.

To request service or to get information on Charleston County Mosquito Control activities, call (843) 202-7880. For information on educational programs and presentations available from Charleston County Mosquito Control, call (843) 202-7886. Visit the American Mosquito Control Association's Web site at www.mosquito.org for information on various mosquito-related subjects such as home mosquito control methods, repellents and mosquito biology.

SIDEBAR

MOSQUITO FACTS:

- A mosquito's life revolves around water; a female mosquito lays her eggs in water or in areas expected to flood.
- Once they hatch, a larvae mosquito must remain in water until it emerges as an adult approximately one to two weeks later.
- Mosquitoes become infected with the West Nile Virus when they feed on infected birds.
- Mosquitoes can transmit heartworm disease from an infected dog or cat to a healthy dog or cat.

WAYS THE PUBLIC CAN HELP REDUCE MOSQUITOES:

- Every three days, flush birdbaths, potted plant saucers and other containers that hold water
- Keep yard clean and cut
- Remove items from yard that hold water and are not needed outside
- Keep lawn and gardening equipment indoors
- Fix leaky faucets
- Keep gutters clean
- Fill in tree holes with sand or concrete
- Change pet water dishes regularly
- Chlorinate pools and clean the pool and filters
- Add fish to ponds

- Written by Jennie Davis -