



## Charleston County/SCDHEC News Release

Release Number: 3483

Date: August 20, 2012

# Mosquito Control and DHEC Aim to Prevent West Nile Virus

*11 human cases in S.C. this year*

So far in 2012 there has been one human case of [West Nile virus](#) in Charleston County, and 11 human cases in South Carolina overall (as of Aug. 20). [Charleston County Government's Mosquito Control Division](#) and the [S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control \(DHEC\)](#) are concerned with the health issue and are working hard to educate residents.

[Mosquito Control](#) staff is collecting mosquitoes from various locations on a weekly basis, and new collection sites have been added in the last month. Trapped mosquitoes are sent to DHEC's Virology Lab for West Nile virus testing.

In addition, [Mosquito Control](#) staff has been spraying diligently using hand-held, truck-mounted and aircraft-mounted spray units. This process will continue until the threat of the virus subsides.

The mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are mosquitoes that breed in ditches, catch basins, flower pots, kiddie pools, bird baths, etc. County staff has treated several thousand catch basins throughout the County with a product that controls the larval stage for 150 days. They also continue to treat all ditches with standing water to prevent young larvae from becoming flying adult mosquitoes.

"These mosquitoes love filthy, old, stagnant water, and mosquitoes only need a tiny bit of water to lay eggs," said Donna Odom, Charleston County Mosquito Control Superintendent. "The public has to help by flushing water out by cleaning out eaves, making sure that boats and tarps do not hold water, and keeping unused swimming pools empty, covered or treated. Keep anything that has potential to hold water, like toys, buckets, cans and bottles, turned over and emptied."

Charleston County Mosquito Control employees are working seven days a week, treating standing water and spraying for adult mosquitoes.

DHEC recommends citizens pay attention to the "four Ds" as the most effective ways to prevent West Nile virus:

- DEET – Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon, eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Repellents help keep mosquitoes from biting. DEET can be used safely on infants and children two months of age and older.
- DRESS – Wear clothing that reduces the risk of skin exposure.
- DAWN AND DUSK – Exposure to mosquitoes is most common during the early morning and evening so it is important to wear repellent at that time. Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes.
- DRAIN – Mosquitoes lay their eggs on standing water. Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flowerpots, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls. If you have a pond, use mosquito fish (available from your local mosquito and vector control agency) or commercially available products to eliminate mosquito larvae.

People bitten by an infected mosquito may become ill within two to 14 days with flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache, joint pain, muscle pain and occasionally nausea and vomiting. Often they experience sensitivity to light and inflammation of the eyelids. Some may develop a rash.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- To request service or to get additional information on Charleston County Mosquito Control activities, call (843) 202-7880 or fill out a form online at <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/PublicWorks/publicWorkServiceRequest.asp>.
- For questions about how to submit dead birds or questions about testing for West Nile virus, call DHEC's local Environmental Health Office at (843) 202-7020.

## **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.

### **WEST NILE VIRUS FACTS:**

- The West Nile virus cannot be passed from person to person. The only way to get the virus is from the bite of an infected mosquito.
- Most people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms of illness. Some people, about 25% of those infected, may have a mild illness that includes fever, headache and body ache, sometimes accompanied by a rash or swollen lymph glands.
- In less than 1% of the people infected, the severe form of encephalitis will be experienced. Symptoms of encephalitis could include high fever, convulsions, stiff neck, tremors, headache, coma, stupor, disorientation, muscle weakness or paralysis. In a very few cases, mostly among the elderly, death may occur.
- Anyone experiencing severe or unusual headaches should see a doctor as soon as possible. Also, anyone who has been in an area where the virus has been identified and who experiences high fever, muscle weakness, confusion or severe headaches should see a doctor immediately.

### **WAYS THE PUBLIC CAN HELP REDUCE MOSQUITOES:**

- Every three days, flush birdbaths, potted plant saucers and other containers that hold water
- Keep your yard clean and your grass cut
- Remove items from your 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

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