

Charleston County News Release

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Join us during the door-to-door surveys in February (specific locations/neighborhoods to be determined). Call in advance to set up.

Mosquito Control Citizens' Awareness Campaign, Jan. 30 - March 1

Charleston County Mosquito Control goes door-to-door to educate the public

Did you know that only the female mosquito bites? Did you know that South Carolina has native fish that eat mosquito larvae? From Jan. 30 through March 1, Charleston County Mosquito Control employees will be teaching residents about these and many others facts, including how people can help get rid of the pests on their own.

During the 2007 campaign, mosquito control inspectors will distribute educational materials to residents and take samples of mosquitoes found in containers to be brought back to the Mosquito Control lab for identification. They will travel in teams throughout West Ashley, East Cooper and North Charleston on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

"The Mosquito Awareness Campaign is a time to educate citizens about the significance of mosquitoes in their daily lives and how they can help reduce the mosquito population in their own backyards," said Martin Hyatt, Charleston County Mosquito Control Superintendent.

Last year, approximately 1,350 homes were visited during the campaign.

"The fight against container-breeding mosquitoes requires ongoing review and education, and the program is designed to educate residents while surveying for mosquito breeding sites," said Donna Odom, Assistant Superintendent for Charleston County Mosquito Control. "Container-breeding mosquitoes generate up to 30 percent of the requests for service received by the Mosquito Control division each year."

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Of these mosquitoes, the Tiger mosquito is a significant pest and can carry the West Nile Virus. It is very difficult for Mosquito Control personnel to reduce the number of Tiger mosquitoes because they are only daytime biters and have a short flight distance of up to 1,000 feet from where they breed. Hence, the most effective way to control this mosquito is for residents to eliminate standing water on their property.

"Going door-to-door 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 100,000 acres by aircraft and 730,000 acres through ground spraying.

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, 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 including educational materials and presentations, call (843) 202-7880.

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