

Charleston County News Release

Release Number: 2814

Date: August 2, 2007

Note to media: Mosquito Control Director, Martin Hyatt, will be available for interviews this week; please call (843) 958-4012 to schedule a time and location.

See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/ccmcd.htm>

Charleston County Mosquito Control Division Responds to West Nile Virus Threat

Residents urged to take precautions as mosquitoes in local areas test positive for the virus.

The Charleston County Mosquito Control Division is responding to the threat posed by the West Nile virus (WNV).

The SC Department of Environmental Control (DHEC) determined that mosquitoes in West Ashley, James Island and the in the city of Charleston peninsula have tested positive for the virus.

According to a news release issued by DHEC on July 31, Aiken, Charleston and Clarendon counties have the state's first confirmed West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes this year, and York County has the first positive bird.

Charleston County Mosquito Control Division is helping to decrease the threat of the virus by:

- Treating catch basins in West Ashley, James Island and downtown Charleston for larval and adult mosquitoes. Catch basins are a significant source of the Southern House Mosquito, which is a major carrier of WNV.
- Increasing ground spraying for adult mosquitoes in West Ashley, James Island and downtown Charleston.
- Collecting mosquitoes from West Ashley, James Island, downtown Charleston, North Charleston and Mount Pleasant, and testing these insects for the presence of WNV. Other areas will be included if necessary.
- Monitoring the situation to determine when and where airplane spray missions will be required to reduce adult mosquito activity.

The public should take the following precautions to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes:

- Wear long sleeves and long pants when outdoors and use a repellent containing DEET, Picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Follow the label's directions when using any repellent.
- Keep property clear of standing water where mosquitoes can breed.
- Stay inside during dawn and dusk hours when mosquitoes are most active.
- Keep screens on windows and doors in good repair.

The public is requested to reduce mosquito breeding by doing the following:

- Flush birdbaths, potted saucers and other containers that hold water every three days because it can take as little as six days for mosquito eggs to hatch and become adults.
- Remove items from yard that hold water and are not needed outside such as wheel barrows, vehicle tires without rims, and tarps.
- Keep yard clean and cut to reduce areas where mosquitoes can hide.
- Fix leaky faucets.
- Keep gutters clean.

- Change pet water dishes regularly.
- Chlorinate swimming pools.
- Add fish to ponds.

Chris Evans, a Ph.D. entomologist with DHEC's Bureau of Laboratories says the public can help with West Nile virus surveillance by submitting dead crows or blue jays to a local DHEC County Environmental Health office. Check DHEC's Web site for information about how to safely submit dead birds at: http://www.DHEC.gov/health/envhlth/general_sanitation/bird_testing.htm.

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

The week of June 24-30 was declared the Eighth Annual National Mosquito Control Awareness Week by the American Mosquito Control Association. Charleston County Mosquito Control used 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. Charleston County staff distributed brochures at the five main County libraries, and at James Island County Park, Palmetto Islands County Park, and Wannamaker County Park.

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.

SIDEBAR: West Nile virus

(Source DHEC Web site: http://www.scdhec.net/health/envhlth/general_sanitation/wnv.htm)

- West Nile virus was first isolated in 1937 from a human in the West Nile province of Uganda, Africa. Since then, West Nile viruses have been reported from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, West and Central Asia, and, most recently, the United States and Canada. West Nile virus was first found in the United States in New York City in September 1999.
- West Nile infection was detected in mosquitoes, birds, horses, and a single human case in South Carolina for the first time during 2002.
- The incubation period for WNV in humans (the time from infection to onset of disease symptoms) is usually three to 14 days.
- Most people who are infected with WNV will not have any type of illness. An estimated 20% of the people who become infected will develop West Nile fever: mild symptoms, including fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of mild disease will generally last a few days.
- Severe infection causes West Nile encephalitis (brain inflammation) or meningitis (inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord), and symptoms include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Symptoms of severe disease may last several weeks, although effects on the nervous system might be permanent. An estimated one in 150 persons infected with the West Nile virus will develop a more severe form of disease.
- Clinical signs of WNV infection also have been observed in horses, even though most infected horses do not show symptoms. In general, horses experience a 35 percent death rate. Like humans, virus levels in horses are generally too low to infect arthropod vectors like mosquitoes. For this reason, humans and horses are considered dead-end hosts incapable of continuing the virus transmission cycle. Birds, however, do experience virus levels capable of infecting mosquitoes, and they help to maintain the virus in nature.

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 Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.