

Mosquito Control Update

April 19, 2010

It was a long and cold winter, in fact it was the coldest that we have had in quite some time. As a result, mosquitoes did not begin to become active until about the end of March. As of this date, mosquito populations in general are quite low. In fact, populations of the Southern House Mosquito are extremely low. Very few are being collected in the gravid traps for West Nile virus testing. Also, biologists and inspectors are finding practically no larvae in the roadside septic ditches. Instead, they are finding some *Culex restuans*. This species is generally a cool weather mosquito and breeds in fresh water environments.

For the past couple of weeks, coastal St. Tammany Parish has been experiencing a problem with *Culicoides*, or biting midges and sometimes called gnats. The larvae of these pesky insects are aquatic or semi-aquatic, or else they live in moist soil; habitats mainly include the marsh and swampy areas. Their activity period is generally early morning and throughout the day until dark. As a result, it is ineffective to spray for *Culicoides* at dark when most mosquito species are active. Generally they remain a problem throughout the spring and sometimes into the summer. The District has employed several aerial treatments in early morning and one in the early evening just before dark. Good results were obtained; however, relief is only short lived because of re-infestation. Some spraying by truck was also performed in the coastal areas of the parish.

The District began testing adult mosquitoes for the presence of West Nile virus. Gravid traps and CO₂ baited CDC traps are run twice a week from at least 28 locations in the parish to collect the adult mosquitoes for testing. Due to the low mosquito populations, low numbers have been collected. A total of 148 mosquito pools have been tested from 101 locations so far and all have returned with negative results.

Ground adulticide has been performed throughout the entire parish and some locations have received additional treatments. In addition, all roadside ditches in the parish have been treated. Since mosquito populations in the roadside ditches are presently low, spot treatments are employed in most cases.

As soon as temperatures remain warm, mosquito populations will increase and treatments will become more extensive and frequent.