

Mosquito Control Update

August 1, 2011

The St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement District received results from the LSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab on Friday that 5 of the 98 mosquito pools submitted for testing were positive for West Nile virus. Three of the pools were from Covington, one was from Madisonville, and one from Mandeville. All of the positive pools were isolated from the Southern House Mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*, the primary vector for West Nile virus. This mosquito breeds almost exclusively in roadside ditches that contain high organic content commonly found in residential areas where homes rely on filter beds and septic tanks for waste water treatment. So far this year there have been a total of 11 positive mosquito pools for West Nile virus out of 1605 tested. In addition, a blood donor tested positive for West Nile virus, but had no symptoms. All 11 mosquito pools but two were isolated from the Southern House Mosquito. Each week the District collects 75-100 mosquito pools from throughout the Parish to test for the presence of West Nile virus. The testing allows the District to monitor locations for the virus. Control efforts are increased in areas of positive virus activity. The population numbers of the Southern House mosquito has been greatly reduced over the past couple of weeks. At present, the breeding index is only 2.0 mosquitoes per sample dipped, which is considered low. The roadside ditches that breed the Southern House Mosquito are treated every 5-7 days to prevent adult mosquito emergence. If left unchecked, these mosquitoes can explode in numbers as high as 100-200 mosquitoes per sample dipped. Aerial treatments were conducted recently in Madisonville and Covington targeting the Southern House Mosquito. Monday night 20,500 acres will be aerielly treated in the Mandeville area.

Recent rainfalls have triggered increased mosquito production of floodwater breeding mosquitoes. These mosquitoes deposit eggs on the soil surface in swales, depressions, pot holes and low lying areas typically in woodland and marshland areas. The eggs hatch when flooded from rain and after a 5-7 day development period, they emerge as adult mosquitoes. Most areas of the Parish have experienced moderate numbers of the floodwater mosquitoes. Aerial and truck spraying will be employed in the Parish throughout the week to reduce the numbers of these mosquitoes.

Residents are urged to survey their yards for any containers that will hold water and discard them or store them where they will not collect water. Water filled containers breed the Asian tiger mosquito, a species common to this area and is a competent vector for West Nile virus. Eggs are deposited on the inside wall of a container and when rainfall fills the container, the eggs hatch and begin development. These mosquitoes will only fly about 50 yards from their breeding source, so if an individual is experiencing a problem with them, the source is close by. Spraying is effective, however, it is only short lived unless the containers are removed or stored so they will not collect water.