July 17, 2009

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals advised the Mosquito Abatement District Thursday that a West Nile virus human case was confirmed in Covington. Since the beginning of the year, the Mosquito Abatement District has collected and had tested 2,449 mosquito pools from various locations throughout the Parish. Twelve have returned positive for West Nile virus and all were from the western part of the Parish. The southern house mosquito was positive for 11 of the 12 samples. This mosquito species is the primary vector for West Nile virus. It breeds mainly in roadside ditches that contain water with high organic content, but will also breeds in containers that hold water, commonly found in yards. This mosquito prefers to feed on birds, but will also bite mammals. Its activity period is late at night.

The Mosquito Abatement District places more emphasis on the control of the southern house mosquito than any other species, because of its medical importance. All roadside ditch breeding sites within the Parish are treated every 5-7 days with *Bti*, a bacterial spore that is pathogenic specifically to mosquito larvae. Larval counts in the ditches have been progressively decreasing over the past month. In addition, aerial and truck spraying are routinely performed, in many cases, specifically to reduce the numbers of the southern house mosquito. The Covington area has been sprayed several times over the past month, but residents should protect themselves from mosquitoes, especially when outdoors at night. Apply repellents according to label directions, especially those containing DEET®, when going into mosquito prone areas. Check to ensure that weather proofing is intact to keep mosquitoes out of the homes as much as possible. Also, eliminate water sources around homes and businesses, which may serve as breeding sites for the southern house mosquito and the Asian tiger mosquito.

Earlier this week, four species of floodwater mosquitoes emerged as a result of recent rainfalls. Three of the species breed in woodland areas and one, the salt marsh mosquito, breeds in coastal marshes. A sizeable population of the salt marsh mosquito invaded the southeast Slidell area and timely aerial applications were effective in dramatically reducing the populations and preventing them from migrating further inland. The woodland mosquito species were more moderate in numbers and affected several areas throughout the Parish. Ground and aerial spraying were employed throughout the Parish. As the woodland and marsh breeding sites become flooded again from rainfalls, the area will experience more of these mosquitoes. These species are not to be confused with the southern house mosquito, as they are not effective vectors for West Nile virus.

For additional information, please call Chuck Palmisano, Director, St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement District, 985/643-5050.