

July 27, 2009

Mosquito Abatement District personnel were recently informed by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) of another confirmed human case of West Nile virus in the Covington area. This brings the total number of confirmed West Nile virus human cases to two in St. Tammany Parish. Laboratory test results received Friday have indicated an increase of West Nile virus activity in adult mosquito samples collected from throughout the parish. Until July 17, only 18 mosquito samples tested positive for West Nile virus, out of a total of 2,420 tested for the year. All of the positive samples were from the western part of the parish. The latest results indicated that of the 61 mosquito samples submitted for testing last week, 19 returned positive for West Nile virus. The positive samples were from 16 locations throughout the parish and were found in five different mosquito species. These test results indicate that the viral infection rates in mosquitoes have increased.

Mosquito Abatement District personnel will continue a stepped up spraying program involving aerial and ground spraying, as well as spraying aimed at controlling the larval stage of development. The two aircraft are scheduled to spray approximately 102,000 acres throughout the parish this week. In addition, truck spraying will be employed each night. Mosquito populations are relatively low; however, even if this is the case, the increased level of virus in the mosquitoes is of concern. Mosquitoes become infected with virus by feeding on infected birds, their preferred host.

One mosquito species that returned positive for West Nile virus was the Asian tiger mosquito, which has recently become one of the more predominate species in the parish. This mosquito breeds in open containers such as old tires, buckets, cans, wheelbarrows, saucers, bowls, or anything that holds water. Mosquito control biologists and inspectors have been finding these mosquitoes breeding in such containers throughout the parish. This species is a capable vector for West Nile virus. Residents and businesses are urged to check their property for containers that hold water and empty them, and then dispose or store them where they will not collect rainwater. Residents are also advised to wear repellents, especially those containing DEET®, when in mosquito prone areas. Be sure to follow the label directions closely when using repellents.