

Mosquito Control Update

June 11, 2012

The District recently received test results that indicated 4 out of 106 mosquito pools tested for the presence of West Nile virus returned positive. A mosquito pool consists of 5-50 mosquitoes that are collected from a specific location, combined together and tested as one sample. The 106 samples were collected from locations throughout St. Tammany Parish between May 29 and June 4. One positive sample was collected from Mandeville, one from Covington, and two from the Pearl River area. All of the positive samples were from the southern house mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*. These results indicate there is low level West Nile virus activity in the southern house mosquito. This mosquito species breeds almost exclusively in roadside ditches that contain high levels of organic matter. The adult mosquito prefers to take a blood meal from birds, but will also bite humans. It is active at night. The District has stepped up control efforts against this species for the past 6 weeks and will continue to do so. Aerial spray treatments have been employed throughout most of the parish to reduce the numbers of the southern house mosquitoes. In addition, 6 crews have been treating roadside ditches throughout the parish on a weekly basis.

Preliminary reports indicate that the parish received 6-8 inches of rainfall over the weekend. The rainfall is a double edge sword. In one respect, it should help to reduce the breeding density of the southern house mosquito by the introduction of much needed fresh water into the ditches. On the other hand, the rainfall will most likely stimulate the hatch of more woodland and marshland floodwater mosquitoes. March and April were months with very active floodwater mosquito activity. Biologists and mosquito control inspectors are now actively inspecting many of the known breeding sites for these mosquitoes. The life cycle for floodwater mosquitoes from egg stage to adult takes 5-7 days depending on species and temperature. Many of the floodwater mosquito breeding sites in the urban areas have been pretreated with altosid briquets. This product is a synthetic insect growth regulator which disrupts the molting process of the immature stage of development and prevents adult emergence.

The District is in a very active period for mosquito development. Residents are encouraged to survey their property for any containers that can hold water such as buckets, vases, cans, and other type of artificial containers. Residents should discard the containers or store them where they will not collect water. It is also suggested, when in mosquito prone areas, that residents use mosquito repellents that contain DEET and closely follow label directions.