

Mosquito Control Update

November 3, 2009

The arrival of cooler temperatures caused a decrease in mosquito activity. Generally, adult mosquitoes become less active in search of a blood meal when temperatures drop below 60 degrees. The cooler weather does not kill the adult mosquitoes, but instead just slows down their metabolism. As temperatures warm, they once again become active. It becomes more difficult to control adult mosquitoes this time of year, because there is not a large window of opportunity to conduct spraying for adult mosquitoes. The adulticide sprays work by impinging on the mosquitoes as they are in flight and not as a residual treatment. If mosquitoes are relatively inactive when temperatures cool, the sprays are not very effective. Usually during the cooler periods, there is about 1 or 2 hours available to spray at night before control procedures are less effective. As a result, aerial adulticide was employed only once over the past two weeks. On that occasion, 20,480 acres in Mandeville and southeast Slidell were sprayed for the control of the salt marsh mosquito. High winds over the past two weeks also prevented additional aerial spraying. Ground ULV spraying was employed on several nights over the past two weeks. The primary target species were the salt marsh mosquito and other domestic floodwater mosquitoes. Larviciding of the roadside ditches for the control of the southern house mosquito continued daily over the past two weeks. Last week the breeding index of the southern house mosquito was only 2.7 which is extremely low.

The Louisiana State Department of Health and Hospitals informed mosquito control officials last week of two West Nile virus human cases. One case was in central Slidell while the other was in northeast Slidell. One case had an onset date between September 13–19 while the other case had an onset date between October 4–10. It was surprising to see these cases reported because West Nile virus activity, as indicated by the analysis of mosquito pools, had been very low during these dates. In fact two weeks prior to the September case, the West Nile virus activity levels were very low and remained at very low levels up to the present. Since August 30, there have only been 6 positive mosquito pools for West Nile virus out of 803 tested. In addition, the last positive West Nile virus pool from Slidell occurred on August 10. It is very possible that the recent human cases may have been infected as a result of travel outside of the parish. Since the State Health Department does not investigate whether or not the victims had a travel history, this question will not be answered.