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MCHD ASKS THE COMMUNITY TO HELP DETER MOSQUITOS
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As pools are uncovered and grills are lit, the Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD) wants to remind residents to take preventative measures to help deter mosquitoes. Mosquitoes may carry the West Nile Virus (WNV) and La Crosse Encephalitis (LACV). Both diseases occur primarily in late spring through fall and are spread by the bite of an infected mosquito.

Most people get infected with West Nile virus by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread the virus to humans and other animals.

LACV is maintained in a cycle between Aedes triseriatus (the eastern treehole mosquito) and vertebrate hosts (especially small mammals such as chipmunks and squirrels) in deciduous forest habitats (i.e., forests with trees that lose their leaves each year). Humans can become infected with LACV from the bite of an infected mosquito. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) describes LACV as a rare disease that is one of a group of mosquito-transmitted viruses that can cause inflammation of the brain, or encephalitis. In the United States, about 80 to 100 LACV disease cases are reported each year.

The symptoms of both West Nile and La Crosse Encephalitis are relatively mild, commonly exhibiting fever, headache and body aches, often with skin rash and swollen lymph glands. Headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, occasional convulsions and paralysis mark more severe infections. In more severe cases, hospitalization and intensive supportive therapy may be needed. At this time, there is no specific treatment.

Anyone who sees a dead bird should contact the MCHD (CDC recommends that dead birds should not be handled with bare hands). Birds that have been dead for less than 24 hours are tested for West Nile Virus at the Office of Laboratory Services in Charleston, W.Va. Do not contact the MCHD if the bird has been dead for more than 24 hours because it is no longer suitable for testing.

In addition to preparing for another season of mosquitoes that bring West Nile and LACV, Zika virus must also be taken into consideration. Zika virus is transmitted primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito. The mosquito acquires the virus after feeding on the blood of a person infected with Zika virus. The Asian tiger mosquito, Aedes albopictus, a vector for Zika virus, is widespread in counties across West Virginia. Although no human cases of Zika virus disease have been acquired in the United States, it is possible that mosquitoes in West Virginia could acquire the virus.
from an infected traveler who just returned from an area where Zika is spreading. If this occurred, then the mosquito could spread the disease to other people in West Virginia.

Because all 3 of these diseases have no specific treatment but are transmitted by mosquitos, the MCHD is asking businesses and residents to take the following precautionary measures to reduce the number of mosquitoes:

- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers.
- Pay special attention to discarded tires. Stagnant water in used tires is where many mosquitoes breed.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers left outdoors.
- Have clogged roof gutters cleaned often, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. Roof gutters can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use. Stagnant water in wading pools becomes a place for mosquitoes to breed.
- Turn over wheelbarrows, and do not let water stagnate in birdbaths. Both provide breeding habitats for domestic mosquitoes.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens can become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools not in use. A swimming pool left unattended by a family on vacation for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood wide complaints. Mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers.
- Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes may breed in any puddle that lasts for more than four days.

The MCHD and CDC also encourage the use of insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus on exposed skin. The repellent/insecticide permethrin can be used on clothing to add extra protection. Always follow the directions on the package or spray can. Many mosquitoes are most active at dusk and dawn. Be sure to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and pants at these times, or consider staying indoors during these hours. Make sure to have good screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out of the home.

If you or anyone in your household has symptoms that are causing you concern, consult a healthcare provider for proper diagnosis.

For more information about the West Nile Virus and LACV, visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/wnv_factsheet.htm or www.cdc.gov/lac/gen/qa.html.

Please visit our website at www.monchd.org, or contact the Monongalia County Health Department at 304-598-5100 with any questions or concerns.