



NEWS RELEASE . FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2020

Oklahoma City-County Health Department's Mosquito Surveillance Detects Mosquitoes Carrying West Nile Virus

(Oklahoma City) - Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) Epidemiologists confirmed that a sample of mosquitoes from a trap in Oklahoma County has tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This is a reminder to take precautions against WNV and other mosquito-borne illnesses. There have been no confirmed cases of WNV in humans in Oklahoma County this year.

OCCHD has been nationally awarded for our mosquito surveillance program working with municipal governments and other partners like Tinker Air Force Base to confirm when mosquito-borne illness is present in the area. Mosquito trap samples are taken and tested once a week for the presence of mosquito-borne illness. Working with our partners, we make sure that businesses and residents in areas that have traps showing positive samples are aware of preventative methods.

The goal of the surveillance is to detect the presence of disease carrying mosquitoes, determine the population, species, and make a risk assessment with the release of the weekly "Skeeter Meter" which shows our risk to be normal at this time.

"It is an awareness tool used to alert residents of OKC-County of the risk from disease carrying mosquito activity," said OCCHD Epidemiologist Cynthia Bates.

Typically, the months of July through October are the most active for exposure to WNV in Oklahoma.

The mosquito surveillance program was launched in 2013 after dozens of confirmed cases of WNV were reported in Oklahoma County in 2012.

West Nile virus is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito, which feeds on infected birds and then transmits the virus when biting humans, horses, and some other mammals. Symptoms include a sudden fever, headache, dizziness, and muscle weakness.

Oklahoma County has experienced West Nile virus cases every year since 2012. Many individuals impacted by the virus may not have symptoms, however the virus can cause major illness and death in some individuals.

Steps to Fight the Bite:

- Drain buckets, cans, pool covers, pots, and tires from holding standing water so mosquitoes do not have a place to breed.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET or other CDC approved repellents on exposed skin and clothing when you go outdoors.
- Repair or install window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Clean leaves and debris from rain gutters regularly to ensure they are not clogged.

About OCCHD

OCCHD was established in 1910 and was one of the first public health departments in the entire nation to be awarded accreditation status by the Public Health Accreditation Board. Currently, OCCHD has multiple locations around Oklahoma City. The mission of the agency is to protect health, promote wellness and prevent disease by working with the community for a healthy future.