



DEP URGES PUBLIC TO HELP CONTROL MOSQUITO POPULATION BY ELIMINATING STANDING WATER FROM PROPERTIES

(20/P31) TRENTON – As the phased reopening of New Jersey continues amid the COVID-19 pandemic and warming weather, the Department of Environmental Protection reminds the public that controlling the mosquito population and risk for disease is more important than ever, Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe said.

With public health in the spotlight as a result of the pandemic, residents doing their part to eliminate potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes takes on added significance and bolsters the work of the New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission. Moreover, a very mild winter and anticipated wet weather makes prevention efforts even more critical as mosquito season begins. Additionally, the American Mosquito Control Association has declared June 21-27 as National Mosquito Control Awareness Week.



“The New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission oversees several longstanding programs designed to provide state assistance directly to county mosquito-control programs,” Commissioner McCabe said. “This assistance helps counties deliver targeted, science-based and environmentally sound mosquito-control services to the public. But we also need the public’s help and urge people to eliminate from their properties areas of standing water where mosquitoes may breed.”

New Jersey’s mosquito season has started early in recent years and has been exceedingly rainy and hot with warm temperatures extending well into the fall. During the 2018 and 2019 seasons, surveillance programs documented above-average mosquito populations and record-setting levels of West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis in mosquitoes.

“Vaccinated animals are much less likely to contract deadly diseases such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile virus,” Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher said. “ We strongly encourage owners of livestock and pets to vaccinate their animals to help protect against diseases spread by mosquitoes. The State Mosquito Control Commission’s vital role is enhanced when health precautions are followed.”

Testing has started for a variety of pathogens spread by mosquito bites, including Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile virus.

“Spending time outdoors, whether walking, gardening, or playing with our dogs, while social distancing is a good way to maintain physical and mental health,” said Health Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli. “As we remain vigilant about protecting ourselves and our families from COVID-19, we must also take precautions to prevent and control mosquito-borne diseases.”

New Jersey’s mosquito control agencies use a variety of methods to combat mosquitoes, including public awareness campaigns, targeted larval habitat source-reduction programs, use of natural predators such as mosquito-eating fish, and judicious application of EPA- and DEP-approved insecticides by ground and aerial means.

Residents can take these steps to protect themselves and their families:

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents when outdoors and wear protective clothing.
- Empty water from flowerpots, pet food and water dishes, birdbaths, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels and cans at least once or twice a week.
- Clear clogged rain gutters.
- Check for and remove any containers or trash that may be difficult to see, such as under bushes, homes or around building exteriors.
- Dispose of unused tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that have accumulated on your property.
- Drill holes in the bottom and elevate recycling containers left outdoors.
- Repair and clean storm-damaged roof gutters, particularly if leaves from surrounding trees tend to clog drains. Roof gutters can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
- Avoid allowing water to stagnate in bird baths.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens become major mosquito producers if they stagnate.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, including those not in use. An untended swimming pool can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Be aware that mosquitos may develop in the water that collects on pool covers.
- Stay in air-conditioned places or rooms with window screens that prevent access by mosquitoes.



- If a mosquito problem remains after taking the above steps, call your county mosquito control agency and ask for assistance. There are larval habitats that only your local mosquito control program can properly address.

The New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission was founded in 1956 to protect the public from nuisance mosquitoes and the threat of mosquito-borne disease. It works closely with all 21 county mosquito control agencies, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers, the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture on coordinated control efforts. The commission also recommends to the Governor and Legislature changes in state laws needed to protect public health and carry out efficient and safe mosquito-control efforts throughout the state.

“We have been at this for a long time and have learned much over the years,” said Commission Chairman John Sarnas. “Still, there is always something new to challenge us. Having the combined knowledge and experience of all of these agencies engaged and working with us to address these challenges has proven to be a successful model.”

To learn more about the New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission and for links to county mosquito agencies visit www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito.

For more information on how to prevent mosquito bites and illness, or to mosquito-proof your home and yard, visit http://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/faq/mosquito_checklist.pdf or <http://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/vectorborne/C2506--Mosquito-borne%20Diseases%20Brochure.pdf>.

For about the National Mosquito Control Association and National Mosquito Control Awareness Week, visit <https://www.mosquito.org/> and <https://www.mosquito.org/page/mosquitoweek>.

To view a video about how to mosquito-proof your property, visit <https://vimeo.com/427937336>.

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