



# News Release

Shelby County Health Department  
814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

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## SCHD Warns of Lengthy West Nile Virus Season for 2012

MEMPHIS, TN – The Shelby County Health Department has received confirmation of mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus within the areas of ZIP codes **38109, 38122, 38134, and 38135**. This is the earliest occurrence of positive West Nile pools on record in addition to the most positive pools present this early in Shelby County.

Since the middle of March, the Shelby County Health Department's Vector Control Program has applied Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved larvicides to bodies of water known to produce mosquitoes. These actions are part of the Health Department's proactive effort to decrease the number of mosquitoes. Larviciding is the most effective method of reducing mosquito populations.

As an additional precaution, the Health Department will continue to schedule truck-mounted sprayings (i.e. adulticiding) of EPA-approved insecticides in areas where adult mosquitoes are infected with West Nile virus, weather permitting.

Humans contract West Nile virus through being bitten by an infected mosquito. Although West Nile virus can occasionally cause severe disease, most human infections are mild, resulting in fever, headache and body aches that last only a few days. Symptoms of severe disease include a high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma or convulsions. Persons over age 50, under the age of 5, and those with compromised immune systems are at higher risk of severe disease. They should especially be careful to avoid mosquito bites.

To ensure cases of human West Nile Virus are minimized, citizens are also encouraged to be vigilant as it relates to controlling mosquito populations around their homes and businesses. **Citizens are encouraged to:**

- Wear DEET-containing mosquito repellants according to label directions
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Check properties for objects - including old tires, flower pots and drip plates, tin cans, buckets, and children's toys - that collect rainwater and either drain or dispose of the water
- Install or repair windows and door screens
- Empty, clean and refill birdbaths and small wading pools weekly
- Empty and refill pets' water bowls every few days
- Repair failed septic systems
- Repair leaky outside faucets
- Clean rain gutters and down spouts
- Secure swimming pool covers tightly and remove any standing water after rainfall
- Store wheelbarrows, canoes and boats upside down
- Stock ornamental lawn ponds with mosquito fish (Gambusia) that eat mosquito larvae (Gambusia fish are available FREE from the Vector Control Program)

"Historically, most human cases of West Nile virus in Shelby County have not occurred until the months of August and September," states Dr. Tyler Zerwekh, Administrator for Environmental Health Services Bureau at Shelby County Health Department. "However it is absolutely *critical* to exercise the recommendations listed above in addition to using mosquito repellants before going outside to work or play, especially during evening and nighttime hours, to help reduce the mosquito burden in Shelby County".

**(End of Report)**