



News Release



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

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CONTACT: Heather Fortner
Office: (901) 222-8216
Cell: (901) 270-7179

SCHD Continues to Respond to Threats of Mosquito-Borne Illnesses

MEMPHIS, TN – Each week, the Shelby County Health Department continues to receive confirmation of mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus (WNV). Nearly every ZIP code in Shelby County has seen at least one positive mosquito test pool. Three human cases of West Nile virus have been confirmed within Shelby County in 2014.

More recently, the Health Department has also received notification of mosquitoes potentially carrying St. Louis Encephalitis virus (SLEV) within the ZIP codes of **38053, 38106, 38118, 38125, 38133, 38135 and 38138**. SCHD is currently awaiting laboratory confirmation from the Tennessee Department of Health. If confirmed, this would be the first time since 2005 that SLEV has been detected in Shelby County. There have been NO human cases reported in 2014.

Humans contract St. Louis Encephalitis virus through being bitten by an infected mosquito, just as they contract the more commonly known West Nile virus. Although SLEV and WNV 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.

Mosquitoes potentially carrying St. Louis Encephalitis virus are very similar to those that can transmit West Nile virus. Because of this, our current treatment methods of larviciding and adulticiding continue to offer residents added protection from both of these diseases.

“Historically, most human cases of West Nile virus in Shelby County occur in the months of August and September,” states Dr. Helen Morrow, Health Officer for the Shelby County Health Department. “During these months it is absolutely *critical* to exercise the recommendations listed below in addition to using mosquito repellants before going outside to work or play, especially during evening and nighttime hours.”

To ensure cases of human West Nile virus and St. Louis Encephalitis virus are minimized, citizens are 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 – **please call for availability (901) 222-9715**)

Between the months of April and October, the Vector Control Program applies Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved larvicides to bodies of water known to produce mosquitoes. Larviciding is the most effective method of reducing mosquito populations having the potential to kill thousands of mosquito larvae before they hatch and become flying (and biting) mosquitoes.

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 and St. Louis Encephalitis virus, weather permitting. Adulticiding is only effective at killing mosquitoes that are actively flying in the air when the spray is applied to a given area.

The Shelby County Health Department's Epidemiology Department keeps an up-to-date record of all confirmed human cases, and any subsequent deaths, online at <http://shelbycountyttn.gov/index.aspx?NID=2404>. Any new cases will be posted online as they are received.

Weekly spray schedules for adulticiding will continue to be released and posted online at www.schdresponse.com/content/mosquito-spray-schedule.