

Mosquito Control Update

August 18, 2009

Mosquito control operations have increased considerably over the past week. For the past two months much of the District's focus has been on West Nile virus prevention. We are still intently focused on West Nile virus and targeting controls at reducing the mosquitoes that transmit the virus, but another problem developed last week. A major brood of salt marsh mosquitoes emerged and began to migrate inland. The salt marsh mosquito breeds in marshland areas commonly found along the southern coast of St. Tammany Parish from the extreme eastern part of the parish all the way to the Tchefuncta River. On Wednesday, August 12, the District aerially treated about 500 acres of the marshland to control the salt marsh mosquito larvae. Good results were obtained, however the area treated was only a fraction of the breeding that was occurring throughout the marsh and areas south of St. Tammany Parish. The salt marsh mosquito has a very strong flight range and can easily migrate 20-30 miles from its breeding site in search of a blood meal. On Friday, August 14, adult salt marsh mosquitoes began to emerge and migrate into the populated areas. The District aerially sprayed 30,720 acres in eastern and central Slidell to control the newly emerged adults. Some landing rates were as high as 80 per minute, especially in the coastal communities. On Saturday night, August 15, another 20,480 acres were aerially sprayed from central Slidell to Lacombe. By Sunday morning, population levels of the salt marsh mosquito were greatly reduced and they were not permitted to migrate inland into the major populated areas. As more rainfall occurs and if the marshes receives high tides to flood more of the marshland, the area will see additional breeding of the salt marsh mosquito. As it stands today, there are some pockets of salt marsh mosquito adults in the area, and the District will continue to direct controls to reduce those numbers.

On Thursday, August 13, the District was informed by the Department of Health and Hospitals of two more human cases of West Nile virus from the Covington area. It is suspected that the mosquito species likely involved with the transmission is the Asian tiger mosquito. Mosquito control biologists and inspectors have found this species in many locations in the Covington area and the West Nile virus has been isolated in this mosquito earlier this year in St. Tammany Parish. It breeds in artificial containers such as discarded tires, buckets, cans, flower pots, and anything that will

hold water. The District continues to urge residents to check their property and store containers so they will not collect water. Although the southern house mosquito is considered the primary carrier of West Nile virus, mosquito inspections have not detected its presence very much in the Covington area where the human cases have occurred. On Friday, August 14, the District received results from the LSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab of five positive mosquito pools for West Nile virus out of 75 tested. A mosquito pool is a collection of 5-50 adult mosquitoes of the same species from the same collection site. The five positive samples came from Covington, Mandeville, Slidell, and Lacombe. It is evident that the virus is present in most areas of St. Tammany Parish. The infection levels in the mosquitoes are considered moderate to low.

Much control continues to be directed at treating the roadside ditches where the southern house mosquito breeds. These ditches are treated every 5-7 days. Truck spraying to control adult mosquitoes continued throughout the parish.