



MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICT

ST. TAMMANY PARISH

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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For Immediate Release

St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement (STPMAD) has collected mosquitoes that have tested positive for infection with *West Nile virus* (WNV) for the first time this year. The infected mosquitoes were collected from traps in the Covington area over the last two weeks. The presence of WNV in mosquitoes indicates an elevated risk to people in the area. Residents in the Covington area can expect to see increased mosquito abatement efforts, including daytime larval inspections and treatments, and nighttime mosquito spraying with trucks and airplanes.

St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement collects mosquitoes from over ninety sites across the parish from February through November. Collected mosquitoes are identified to species, counted, and submitted in groups or sample pools for virus testing to the Louisiana Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (LADDL), at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. Three of the 190 sample pools submitted last week tested positive for WNV. In 2018 to date, STPMAD has tested over 1,500 samples.

West Nile virus is a mosquito-transmitted pathogen that primarily infects birds. Occasionally bird-biting mosquitoes may bite people and transmit WNV to a human. The primary vector of WNV in South Louisiana is the southern house mosquito, *Culex quinquefasciatus*, which feeds on birds about 80% of all blood meals and rears its larvae in organically rich water. St. Tammany Parish has over 400 miles of roadside ditches which receive effluent from residential on-site sewage treatment plants (septic systems). These ditches receive treatment to control larvae of the southern house mosquito every five days during the summer.

We ask residents to do their part to reduce their risk of contracting WNV by making certain their septic systems are in proper working order, including having them pumped out if necessary, and checking to make certain aerators are operable. Also, controlling the vegetation in the ditches helps to allow the larval control treatments to reach the water surfaces. Finally, avoiding or minimizing exposure to biting mosquitoes by: 1) wearing CDC recommended mosquito repellent such as those containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus; 2) avoiding peak biting times such as one hour prior to and after dusk and dawn; and 3) wearing long sleeve shirts and pants.

For additional information please call Dr. Kevin Caillouet at the St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement office (985)643-5050.