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First Cases of Zika Virus Confirmed in Oklahoma Travelers

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) has received confirmation that two state residents acquired the Zika virus during international travel. These are the first laboratory confirmed cases of the virus in Oklahoma. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) laboratory in Ft. Collins, CO notified OSDH of the results this week.

Zika virus is transmitted to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, though there also have been reports of transmission through sexual contact or from mother to unborn child. The disease can cause fever, rash, muscle and joint aches and red eyes. These symptoms typically last several days to a week, and hospitalizations are rare. Most people exposed to Zika virus won't develop any symptoms at all.

The most significant health threat is for pregnant women because Zika virus infections have been linked to the birth defect microcephaly, miscarriages, and other poor birth outcomes in some women infected during their pregnancy. Local transmission of Zika virus is not currently occurring in the United States.

"We are recommending that individuals returning from travel to areas where Zika virus has been identified to consult with their physician if they exhibit any of the symptoms associated with the disease, particularly women who are pregnant" said Oklahoma State Epidemiologist Dr. Kristy Bradley. "Fortunately for Oklahoma, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is not commonly found in the state".

Southern states with greater presence of this mosquito are at higher risk of seeing cases of Zika virus spread locally. However, a Zika virus epidemic is unlikely in the 48 contiguous states due to the widespread use of air conditioning, lower density of housing, and availability and use of mosquito repellents.

OSDH Acute Disease Service epidemiologists are working directly with health care providers statewide to determine if their patients meet the criteria for testing and arrange for testing to be conducted. There is no vaccine, preventative medication, or specific treatment drug available for Zika virus.

The CDC and OSDH advise pregnant women to delay travel to foreign countries and U.S. territories where Zika virus is being transmitted. Oklahomans traveling to Zika-affected areas over the upcoming Spring Break should take extra precautions to protect against mosquito bites. To prevent the spread of the disease, people traveling to those areas should carefully follow steps to avoid mosquito bites while there and for seven days after returning home.

Mosquito exposure prevention tips while traveling to affected areas include:

1010 South Sheridan, Lawton, OK 73501
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www.health.ok.gov/chds/comanche
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- Use air conditioning or window/door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If you are not able to protect yourself from mosquitoes inside your home or hotel, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- Use mosquito repellents according to instructions.
- If weather permits, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Help reduce the number of mosquitoes outside your home, hotel room or workplace by emptying standing water from containers, such as flowerpots or buckets

For more information on the Zika virus, visit www.ok.gov/health for links to fact sheets in English, Spanish and Portuguese, information from the CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) along with the most recent statistics on cases.

