



For Release: June 1, 2015
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Mosquito Safety: Prevent Mosquito Bites and Breeding

The Comanche County Health Department encourages residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites. There are over 60 species of mosquitoes in Oklahoma, some of which may carry disease. The species differ in how they look. They also differ in how they act, such as how aggressive they are when they bite, where they breed, and when they are the most active. The type of mosquitoes that hatch after severe flooding are primarily the species of mosquitoes classified as “nuisance mosquitoes”. They bite aggressively and cause lots of itchy bites, but they are not typically involved with transmission of diseases. Floodwater mosquito populations tend to die out 3 weeks after the rains stop and the sun dries out affected low lying areas. *Culex* species of mosquitoes are the primary vector of West Nile virus (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis. This type of mosquito increases in numbers during mid to late summer when the temperatures climb and the weather pattern is drier. Since WNV was introduced into Oklahoma, there have been 3 outbreak years – 2003, 2007 and 2012. All three of these seasons were characterized by higher than normal summer temperatures and drought.

When dealing with mosquitos, disease carrying or not, prevention is your best bet. For this reason, “we want to remind everyone of personal protection measures such as use insect repellent when outdoors and other preventative measures to reduce exposure to mosquitos,” said Comanche County Health Department Regional Director Brandie O’Connor. The best way to prevent mosquito bites is to wear insect repellent when outdoors. Insect repellent should contain an active ingredient such as 10-30% DEET, Picaridin (KBR 3023), or oil of lemon eucalyptus (PMD). A higher percentage of DEET or Picaridin in a repellent does not mean that your protection is better—just that it will last longer. Always read and follow label directions for proper application of insect repellants.

Mosquitos are most active during the early morning and early evening hours. Avoiding outdoor activities during these times can reduce the chance of being bitten. When possible, wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks outdoors. Mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing, but spraying insect repellent on top of clothing can provide extra protection. Skin underneath clothing should not be sprayed. Placing mosquito netting over infant carriers when outdoors can help protect again bites.

There are also measures that may reduce mosquito bites around the home. Broken or missing window and door screens should be repaired to prevent mosquitoes from





Comanche County
Health Department

entering. Mosquitoes breed in standing water. Water should be prevented from gathering in buckets, cans, pool covers, and tires. Pets' outdoor water bowls should be emptied and refilled daily. Bird baths must be rinsed, scrubbed, and refilled once per week. Boats should be covered or stored upside-down when not in use. Plastic wading pools should be emptied weekly, and stored inside. Ponds or bodies of water should be treated with an environmentally-friendly product such as BTI, which safely kills mosquito larvae. Ponds may also be stocked with fish that eat larvae. Grass and weeds should be trimmed to keep mosquitoes at bay. Gutters should also be cleared of leaves and debris to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

By wearing insect repellent and mosquito-proofing homes and yards, Comanche County residents will lessen their risks of mosquito exposure. For more information on mosquito bites, visit www.health.ok.gov, or contact the Comanche County Health Department at 580-248-5890.

