

THE TOWN OF Batesburg-Leesville

Single Case of West Nile Virus Confirmed in B-L

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has notified Town officials that a Batesburg-Leesville resident has tested positive for the West Nile virus. Neither DHEC or Town officials can confirm that the virus was contracted in Batesburg-Leesville, but employees are actively spraying for mosquitoes throughout town in response to this news.

Officials say there is no need to be alarmed, but rather, informed on how to protect against mosquitoes, how to recognize signs and symptoms, and be informed on what West Nile virus is.

Town officials began immediately spraying the area within a one mile radius of the infected individual's residence. Areas treated include all of the Town's schools, commercial and residential areas near the center of Town, and known mosquito-prone areas.

"Between the months of May and September, our Public Works crews spray the Town monthly, with each area of Town being treated on a two-week cycle," said Ted Luckadoo, Town Manager. "Our last spraying was only two weeks ago, but we wanted to get going on another application as soon as we were notified."

Additionally, staff from the Town will be going door-to-door passing out information to residents and businesses within the DHEC provided one mile radius on how to protect themselves from mosquitos, eliminate mosquito breeding sites, and what to do if they think they may have been infected.

Individuals most susceptible to the virus are those with weakened immune systems, elderly, and children. "If you have been exposed to mosquitoes and have concerns about the virus or develop symptoms, you should contact your health care provider," Bell said.

Due to children and elderly being more susceptible to the virus, Luckadoo adds that "we have been in constant communication with the School District and made treatment of our school grounds a top priority. Additionally, we identified a nursing home within the one mile radius and treated that area as well."

DHEC stresses the importance of paying attention to the most effective ways to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile Virus:

- Repellents help keep mosquitoes from biting. Apply insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR 3535 according to label instructions.
- Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes.

- Eliminate all sources of standing water on your property, including flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, birdbaths, old car tires, rain gutters and pet bowls.
- Wearing light-colored clothing to cover the skin reduces the risk of bites.

The Town is following a DHEC created Mosquito Control Activities Response Plan specifically for confirmed cases of West Nile virus. "We have a plan in place, and will be executing that plan as effectively as possible," said Luckadoo.

In June, the Town was awarded a \$28,766 Mosquito Control grant by DHEC to purchase mosquito control equipment, insecticides, and training.

The risk of serious illness or death from West Nile Virus is low. Less than one percent of people infected develop a potentially fatal swelling of the brain, known as encephalitis. Most people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms and do not develop any. About one in five people infected becomes ill within two to 14 days with symptoms including fever, headache, joint pain, muscle pain, and occasionally nausea and vomiting. They may often experience sensitivity to light and inflammation of the eyelids, and some may have a rash.

"The vast majority of people infected with West Nile virus have no symptoms," said Linda Bell, M.D. and DHEC's state epidemiologist. "Serious illness such as encephalitis, a potentially fatal inflammation of the brain, will only occur in less than one percent of people infected."

The Town is taking every precaution required by DHEC to protect the citizens.

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