

County Observes National Mosquito Control Awareness Week

By Scott Schermerhorn

June 18-24 is National Mosquito Control Awareness Week. Mosquitoes are not just pesky insects that interrupt our summer activities, they are formidable vectors for dangerous diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, Zika virus, Chikungunya, and West Nile virus. These illnesses can cause severe morbidity and mortality, particularly in regions with limited resources and stressed healthcare providers. The impact of vector-borne diseases extends beyond individual health, it also can affect tourism, economic productivity and, at times, may strain local healthcare systems.

Mosquitoes can be carriers of deadly disease-causing agents and may pose a significant threat to public health throughout the United States and worldwide. During Mosquito Control Awareness Week, Charlotte County Mosquito Control aims to educate individuals, communities, and organizations on how to take proactive measures in mosquito control and safeguard public health. National Mosquito Control Awareness Week gives the public an opportunity to learn more about the 24/7 battle against a growing number of mosquito species. Charlotte County Mosquito Control staff work every day battling mosquitoes that bring irritation and may carry viruses causing diseases to humans as well as pets and livestock.

During National Mosquito Control Awareness Week, everyone is reminded that reducing the prevalence of vector-borne diseases carried by some mosquitos requires a multi-faceted approach involving both mosquito control professionals as well as the general public. Charlotte County Mosquito Control personnel practice an integrated mosquito management strategy, focusing on surveillance, source reduction, larvicide, and adulticide application, along with education regarding personal protection measures. Surveillance plays a crucial role in mosquito management strategy by monitoring mosquito populations and identifying potential disease transmission areas. By collecting and analyzing data on mosquito activity, mosquito control professionals can implement targeted interventions to prevent outbreaks and minimize the risk to public health.

As Florida is an international hub of tourism and trade, new mosquito species can arrive via our seaports, airports and highways. Early surveillance detection is important because once a species arrives in Florida, it could eventually feel at home and move all around our state. Charlotte County Mosquito Control does surveillance to provide early detection by trapping mosquitos, performing landing rate counts, and other best management practices that give the specialists information about mosquito populations in our area.

Source reduction involves eliminating or modifying mosquito breeding habitats, such as stagnant water sources. This approach can significantly reduce mosquito populations and disrupt their lifecycles, thereby curbing disease transmission. Standing water is an important cue to mosquito control efforts. It only takes a bottlecap of water for some female mosquitoes to

lay their eggs. Our trained experts and others around the state immediately take action to limit the risk of disease caused by mosquitoes when conditions appear correct for their breeding.

Larviciding and adulticiding are also essential components of mosquito control programs, particularly in areas where source reduction is challenging. By applying EPA-approved products to mosquito breeding sites, we can effectively prevent the development of mosquito larvae into adult mosquitoes, thus reducing disease transmission. However, it is often impossible to treat all larval production sites, so adulticide activities are often employed by both ground and air when surveillance indicates that biting female mosquitoes have reached intolerable levels.

Personal protection is vital in minimizing the risk of mosquito bites and subsequent infections. Personal actions can be as simple as regularly emptying containers that collect water around the yard, properly maintaining swimming pools, monitoring plants that store water and cleaning up trash bags and tires that are a haven for mosquitoes to breed. The use of mosquito repellents, wearing protective clothing, and repairing window and door screens can also provide a layer of defense against mosquito bites.

Charlotte County Mosquito Control staff draw from a wide range of fields including chemistry, entomology, biology, meteorology, and more, to identify and control any new species as they enter Charlotte County. There are more than 80 species of mosquitoes in our state, and more than 38 species in Charlotte County some carrying various levels of risk to public health while others may be more than a minor nuisance. Each species has unique traits that make them more or less likely to carry dangerous diseases.

While scientists are studying these mosquitos, the spread of mosquito species demonstrates how quickly dangerous mosquitoes can come to Florida and take up residence. Making the job of mosquito control more challenging is most mosquitoes grow and multiply in areas humans cannot comfortably or safely access, such as salt marshes, wetlands, low-lying areas, swamps, and pastures, all plentiful in Charlotte County. Fortunately, Charlotte Counties residents and thousands of visitors have robust dedicated public servants in the Mosquito and Aquatic Weed Control Division. Our teams use cutting-edge technology and scientific tools to help keep our counties' families and businesses safe and prosperous.

While June 18-24 is designated as National Mosquito Control Awareness Week, those involved in mosquito control believe every day is mosquito control day and are always available to answer questions and concerns you may have as well as conduct surveillance, trapping, resistance testing, larviciding, and treating adults to protect human health. aFor more information on National Mosquito Control Awareness Week, please visit AMCA online at www.mosquito.org.

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