

Posted on: June 15, 2016

Village Officials Discuss Mosquito Control With Abatement Administrators



Orland Park village officials recently met with administrators from the South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District to learn more about the agency's mosquito control efforts in the village and how residents can help minimize mosquito populations.

"The South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District serves more than 50 south suburbs and regularly monitors mosquito activity in Orland Park," said Trustee Mike Carroll, chair of the village's Public Works Committee. "They are in Orland Park on a daily basis, monitoring mosquito activity in the area."

South Cook County is the largest district in Illinois and one of the largest in the Midwest. It is divided into four divisions with Orland Township being part of the Western Division.

During mosquito breeding season, district personnel regularly check all potential breeding areas. These include roadside ditches, retention ponds, runoff areas, marshes and wetlands and other low areas that hold water after it rains. Mosquito operators are licensed by the state for mosquito control. The district also works closely with area businesses, cemeteries and other entities reminding them to eliminate standing water on their properties.

Douglas Wright, general manager for the district, explained how the district monitors mosquito presence in its communities.

"We follow a procedure that includes surveillance, scouting, identifying the types of mosquitoes, larva control, adult control and public education and outreach," Wright explained.

The district monitors adult mosquito populations with mosquito traps during the season and regularly collecting samples. The district also uses Gravid Traps to collect the mosquitoes responsible for spreading West Nile Virus.

While scouting mosquitoes in a community, abatement district employees collect water samples to test for larvae to determine if treatment is required. Water areas are treated with water based environmentally sensitive briquettes. Adult mosquitoes collected in traps are tested for the West Nile Virus bacteria.

When mosquito larvae are found, environmentally sensitive larvicides are used to kill them. Killing mosquitoes at the larval stage is the most effective means of controlling mosquito populations. Mosquitoes grow from larva to adult in six days.

"The most important thing that residents can do is eliminate standing water on their properties," said Orland Park Public Works Director John Ingram. "Walk around your

property and look for things that hold water after it rains, making sure they're emptied every time it rains."

Bird baths should be regularly emptied and re-filled with fresh water so mosquitoes cannot leave their larva. Residents using rain barrels should have wire mesh screening covering the top of the barrels.

"Rain barrels can produce thousands of mosquitoes if they're not properly covered," Wright said.

Other areas ideal for breeding mosquitoes include grass clippings, compost piles and organic matter that collect in a home's gutter.

"Residents play a big part in this operation," Wright said. "We need everyone to look closely at their homes and eliminate anything that gives mosquitoes places to breed."

The abatement district offers a number of steps to prevent mosquito bites including wearing light colored long sleeved shirts and long pants. The district recommends staying in places with air conditioning and windows and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. Residents are encouraged to take steps to control mosquitoes inside and outside of their homes and to use Environmental Protection Agency registered insect repellents.

To avoid large populations of mosquitoes, avoid being outside at times when mosquitoes are most active. Residents are encouraged to keep window screens in good repair and keep doors closed. Mosquitoes hide in tall grass so keep lawns well cut. Strong house fans used outside on a patio or deck will also keep mosquitoes away. Mosquitoes don't like to fly in a breeze and the fans help to blow away the CO2 humans exhale making them less detectable to mosquitoes.

"Mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus thrive in stagnant, hot weather," Wright noted, adding that residents monitoring their yards are key to combatting the virus.

During the presentation, mosquito abatement officials noted that the Farmers' Almanac is calling for a hot and dry summer --- ideal for West Nile Virus.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, mosquitoes may bite at any time of the day with peak biting activity for vectors of some diseases being during daylight hours. Other species are most active in twilight periods, dawn and dusk, or in the evening after dark.

"The Village of Orland Park works closely with the mosquito abatement district," Ingram said. "They let us know what they find in the village and we let them know our concerns."

The district maintains an extensive map directory of all bodies of water in all of its communities. There are more than 600 individual creeks, ponds and wetlands, either dry or wet, in the district. Active fishing areas are not usually treated by the district as there is little breeding because the water moves more frequently. Ponds with aerators are best because the water is kept moving and mosquitoes are not able to breed there.

Extensive mosquito repellent information is available on the Centers for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/westnile and on the South Mosquito Abatement District website at www.sccmad.com.

