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Additional Mosquito Spraying Needed

By Cara Host, Staff writer chost@observer-reporter.com

WAYNESBURG - The first attempt to kill mosquitoes that could carry the West Nile Virus was not effective enough, so county and state officials will try again Thursday night.

The state Department of Environmental Protection and the county's Conservation District sprayed areas of Morgan and Franklin townships on August 21. County officials have been monitoring those areas since then and have determined that the mosquito population only declined slightly.

So, they will attempt another round of spraying, focused on two locations: Morgan Township, including Reesman's Trailer Park, Greene County Memorial Park and other surrounding areas; and Waynesburg and Franklin Township, including areas near Waynesburg Borough Sewer Treatment Plant and Meadowlark Park.

"We're going to keep trying until we get the numbers down," said Dustin Teegarden, West Nile program coordinator for the county.

Workers will use two different techniques to kill the mosquitoes at the two locations. In Waynesburg, they will use thermal fogging, which also was used two weeks ago, and at Reesman's Trailer Park, an ultra low-volume insecticide will be used. The spraying will take place Thursday between 8:45 and 10:45 p.m. in Morgan Township and from 9:45 p.m. and midnight in Franklin Township.

Workers will drive around the area near Reesman's Trailer Park and spray the chemical, called permethrin, from a truck. The chemical does not produce the thick, billowing smoke like the thermal fogging.

That smoke decreased visibility for motorists driving on nearby roads when it was used two weeks ago. The ultra low-volume chemical creates a lighter mist, so the conservation district decided to switch to that because the roads are close to the spraying site in Morgan Township.

Residents near both locations should stay inside and bring pets indoors until the mist or fog has lifted, which will be 15 to 30 minutes after the spraying. People in the area also should close all doors, windows and turn off air-conditioning units.

In both treatments, the chemicals used are low concentration, and they should not be harmful to humans, livestock, birds or other wildlife, Teegarden said. The chemicals will kill all airborne insects, but they should not have an effect on bees because the spraying will be conducted at night, when the bees are safe in their hives, Teegarden said.

Anyone with questions or concerns about the spraying should call Greene County Conservation District at 724-852-5278. Staff members also will be available to answer questions at preapplication meetings from 7 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Jefferson-Morgan High School parking lot and from 7:45 to 8:15 p.m. at the Franklin Township Municipal Building parking lot.

The county's West Nile program and DEP started spraying after a mosquito collected August 5 from a trap at Reesman's sewer plant tested positive for the West Nile virus.

West Nile is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito never develop symptoms, and only one in 150 with symptoms develop the more serious West Nile encephalitis, according to DEP.

To combat the spread of the disease, residents are urged to eradicate mosquito breeding grounds by disposing of containers that hold stagnant water.

People also should take precautions to avoid getting bitten by mosquitos by wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors, particularly when mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk.

DEP also suggests people use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. The last presence of the disease in Greene County occurred in 2004 when it was found in a dead bird.