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**Media Contact:** Dianne Shipley 941-861-2852; cell: 941-302-1058;  
Dianne\_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

## Public reminded to protect against mosquito-borne viruses

Local health officials remind residents that mosquito activity is increasing in Sarasota County as the typical summer rain pattern continues. Currently, our sentinel chicken flocks, which serve as an indicator of mosquito-borne illness in our community, have shown some evidence of West Nile Virus (WNV) transmission in Sarasota County.

WNV is a potentially serious illness that is most often spread by the bite from an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds. Infected mosquitoes can then spread WNV to humans and other animals when they bite.

The more time you spend outdoors, the more opportunities infected mosquitoes will have to bite you. Health officials urge residents and seasonal visitors to pay attention to avoiding mosquito bites if you spend a lot of time outside, either working or playing.

“The most common mosquitoes that transmit diseases are associated with the accumulation of water in man-made containers that serve as breeding sites,” says Sarasota County Mosquito Management Director Dr. Eric Schreiber. “Eliminating water sources (buckets, etc.) will greatly reduce encounters with this mosquito. Additionally, make sure that your window screens are in good order to reduce the risk of mosquitoes feeding inside your home.”

There is no vaccine to prevent these diseases in humans. Therefore, everyone is urged to take precautions to reduce their exposure to areas where mosquitoes breed, and to prevent mosquito bites.

These “5 D” precautions listed below help prevent mosquito-borne infections such as West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), dengue fever and malaria:

- **Dusk and Dawn** -- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours, although mosquitoes can bite at other times of the day. When possible, stay in facilities with screened windows and doors and air conditioning to reduce risk of mosquito bites.
- **Dress** – When outdoors and mosquitoes are present, wear clothing such as shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt to cover most of your skin. Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when mosquitoes are present.
- **Deter** mosquito bites – Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with picaridin, DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are effective. Do not apply mosquito repellent to infants younger than 2 months of age. More information on repellents can be found at:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/ga/insect\\_repellent.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/ga/insect_repellent.htm)

- **Drainage** -- Check around your home to rid the area of standing water, including containers that hold water where mosquitoes can lay their eggs. Flush bromeliad plants with fresh water or use a larvicide (e.g., BTI granules) in the "tank" of the bromeliads to limit mosquito development.

For information on how to reduce mosquito-breeding sites around your home or to report a mosquito problem, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit the Sarasota County Health Department's (SCHD) website, [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org). The Florida Department of Health also has related information at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/medicine/arboviral/index.html>

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