

West Nile Virus activity remains light in Peel

Mosquito surveillance continues in Peel Region, although there's been very little West Nile Virus (WNV) activity reported. Peel Public Health released the latest WNV update last week, reporting that as of Aug. 15, there had been only six mosquito pools in the region that had tested positive for the disease. Two had been found in Brampton the previous week, bringing the total there to four, while two others had been found in Mississauga. There have been no positive pools found in Caledon.

The adult mosquito surveillance program started June 15. Adult mosquitoes will continue to be collected weekly from mosquito traps at 31 fixed locations throughout the region until late September. To date, 484 mosquito batches have been tested. There have been no human cases of WNV reported in Peel.

The larviciding program started June 1 and will continue until Sept. 30. Larviciding involves applying environmentally-friendly products to reduce mosquito larvae living in stagnant water. The products are applied to municipal catch basins and selected sites on public property.

The third round of roadside catch basin larviciding is being conducted, and is indicated by a white dot on the catch basin grate. Larviciding of catch basins in the green spaces of parks in Peel is complete. The treatment of surface water sites on public lands is ongoing.

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. David Williams is reminding all Ontarians to protect themselves and their families against WNV this summer.

WNV is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. Everyone who is outside during the warmer months is at risk and should take steps to prevent being bitten.

Most people who catch West Nile virus will experience fever, head and body aches, a mild rash and swollen lymph glands. More serious symptoms include encephalitis (swelling of the brain), difficulty swallowing and confusion. Adults 50 years of age and older and people with underlying medical conditions and/or weaker immune systems are at greater risk.

There are a number of steps members of the public can take to reduce their risk. They include removing stagnant water on their property. That involves emptying or disposing of containers that can hold water, such as old tires, wheelbarrows, barrels, pails, toys and recycling bins. Turn over wading pools, remove water that collects on pool covers and make sure the pool's pump is circulating. To protect themselves from being bitten, people would wear light-coloured clothing, including long sleeves, long pants, socks and a hat whenever they are outdoors (even in the back yard), especially at dusk and at dawn. Use an insect repellent and apply it according to the manufacturer's directions.

To date, there have been 32 WNV-positive mosquito batches found this year in Ontario, including the six in Peel. Twelve of them have been in Windsor-Essex, three in York, two in Niagara and one each in Brant County, Chatham-Kent, Eastern Ontario, Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge, Lambton, Hamilton, Hastings and Prince Edward, Simcoe Muskoka and Waterloo.

There have been three reported WNV human cases; one each from Niagara, Waterloo and Toronto.

There have been two positive mosquito batches reported outside of Ontario: one each in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

South of the border, there have been 141 human cases of WNV in the United States, including 25 in Arizona, 18 in California, 15 in Texas and 10 in Oklahoma.