

For Immediate Release

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Tick and Mosquito Surveillance Program Launches in Washtenaw County *Residents encouraged to “Fight the Bite”*

YPSILANTI, Mich., June 27, 2019 – This summer, the Washtenaw County Health Department will participate in the Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance and Prevention Program in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). The Health Department will provide mosquito and tick monitoring data to MDHHS as part of a statewide system which helps communities to track and prepare for emerging diseases.

The main goal of the program is to identify mosquito species, such as *Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus*, which can transmit Zika and other viruses, and deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), which can spread Lyme or other diseases. Washtenaw County Health Department staff will be setting up mosquito traps throughout the county, including in Chelsea, Dexter, Whitmore Lake, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Saline. Staff will also conduct “tick drags” in several locations to collect ticks for identification.

“We know that Lyme disease can be transmitted in Washtenaw County by infected blacklegged ticks,” says Kristen Schweighoefer, environmental health director for the Washtenaw County Health Department. “Although the mosquitoes that transmit Zika virus have yet to be found here, it’s important to take a proactive approach to better protect and inform our residents. With our changing climate, it’s likely only a matter of time before these species of mosquitoes will be active in our area.”

Several other counties throughout the state, including Livingston, Lenawee, Jackson and Wayne, are contributing to these surveillance efforts.

In 2018, 17 Washtenaw County residents were diagnosed with Lyme disease. Seven of these cases were likely exposed to the Lyme bacteria in the county. Three travel-related cases of Zika were identified among Washtenaw residents in 2016. No confirmed cases of Zika among county residents have been identified since then. Although Zika mosquitoes have not yet been found in Washtenaw County, we know that other mosquito-related illnesses are spread in our community. West Nile virus has been active in our area since 2002, with local human or animal cases occurring nearly every year since then.

The Washtenaw County Health Department recommends the following precautions to keep you and your family safe.

Washtenaw County Health Department
555 Towner Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Phone: 734-544-6700 • Fax: 734-544-6705
washtenaw.org/health



Environmental Health Division
705 N. Zeeb Road • Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Phone: 734-222-3800 • Fax: 734-222-3930
washtenaw.org/envhealth

Mosquito bite prevention tips:

- Use insect repellent to prevent mosquito bites. To find a repellent right for you, use the Environmental Protection Agency's insect repellent search tool: bit.ly/EPArepellent.
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Repair screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.
- Reduce mosquito breeding conditions by eliminating standing water around your yard. Clean gutters, and empty flower pots, tires, barrels, and other items that can hold water.

Tick bite prevention tips:

- Use insect repellent with 20% or more DEET.
- Wear long sleeves, shoes, and socks when outdoors.
- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Examine gear and pets for ticks.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors after outdoor activities.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held mirror. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in the hair.
- To remove a tick, use tweezers and grip the body firmly and pull straight out of the skin. Do not twist the tick. After removing the tick, clean the bite area and your hands.

The MDHHS offers tick identification and testing at no charge for Michigan residents. To submit a photo of a tick for identification, email the photo to MDHHS-Bugs@michigan.gov. To submit a tick found on humans for testing, pick up a free tick submission kit at Washtenaw County Health Department locations at 705 N Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor and 555 Towner Street, Ypsilanti, or follow the instructions on the MDHHS website at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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