

HARLINGEN SEEKS COOPERATION IN FIGHTING MOSQUITOES

Another round of applying tossit larvicides citywide to stop mosquito larvae from becoming adult insects is scheduled to begin Thursday, April 23, 2015, for the City of Harlingen.

City Manager Carlos Yerena said the Environmental Health Department applied spray during suitable weather conditions after early spring rains. A break in the recent precipitation cycle is forecast for late this week and the upcoming weekend which will allow for more insecticide application, he said.

“The Environmental Health Department responds as quickly as possible to potential insect threats after rainy conditions,” Yerena said. “The city also relies on property owners to assist the city with reducing or eliminating mosquito habitat. There is plenty of information involving safety tips that allow the public to take precautions to prevent the spread of potentially harmful diseases.”

The Environmental Health Department covered the entire city with larvicide and adulticide spray from March 27 through March 30. The upcoming application schedule should be completed Sunday, April 26, if dry weather conditions prevail, to target mosquito larvae before the insects hatch to become adults.

“Mosquitoes require stagnant water for their breeding process. Citizens can take effective preventive action called ‘source reduction’ by draining outdoor flower pots like whisky barrels, tree holes, bird baths, children’s wading pools, pet water bowls and anything that holds water,” Environmental Health Department Director Ramiro Gonzales said.

He said that sometimes department employees who respond to sites of mosquito complaints find that the people who complain accidentally have allowed stagnant water to occur on their property. He encouraged Harlingen residents with questions or concerns to call the Environmental Health Department at (956) 216-5220.

The spray crews cover all areas of Harlingen with priorities on the parks, where there is a lot of human activity after sunset, and areas with high grass or dense plant life with foliage that provide safe havens for insects, Gonzales said. The average flight range for mosquitoes is only one-quarter mile, he added, and city personnel respond with follow-up insect assessments whenever citizens point to specific locations.

Gonzales cited “The Four D’s” of mosquito defense as the most effective strategies to limit exposure to mosquitoes.

Dusk / Dawn: Humans and pets should stay indoors as much as possible from sunset to dawn because mosquitoes are most active at night.

Dress: Wear long sleeve shirts and long leg pants while outdoors.

Deet: N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide is an effective and safe ingredient for insect repellents. Other approved repellents include picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535. Follow label instructions and always wear repellent when outdoors.

Drain: Clogged rain gutters, old tires and any standing water in yards can become mosquito breeding sites.

Mosquitoes can carry and spread dengue. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, dengue symptoms include high fever, bad headache, pain behind the eyes, backache, joint pains, and sometimes a rash. It is rarely fatal. There is no vaccine for dengue, but rest, fluids and aspirin-free fever medicine can improve a person's condition. TDSHS advises people with dengue symptoms to see a doctor.

West Nile virus is another disease associated with mosquitoes and the virus can cause serious health complications. About one in 150 people infected with WNV will develop a severe illness that can include high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis that may last several weeks, according to the Cameron County Department of Health and Human Services. The neurological effects may be permanent. About 80 percent of people infected with the WNV will not show symptoms, the CCDHHS noted in a fact sheet.

The TDSHS posts information online about the WNV at www.texaswestnile.org and the department's phone number is (888) 883-9997. The phone number for the TDSHS in Harlingen is (956) 423-0130.

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