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OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES A MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS HEALTH ADVISORY

OKALOOSA COUNTY – A mosquito-borne illness health advisory is being issued following Okaloosa's first human case of West Nile virus. "The numbers of West-Nile positive mosquito pools are up significantly across the state. It's important that residents and visitors are diligent in protecting themselves against mosquitoes," said Dr Karen Chapman, Director of the Okaloosa County Health Department (OCHD).

TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES, REMEMBER "DRAIN & COVER"

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots, or any other container where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances, and other items that are not being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets' water bowls at one or two times a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that do not accumulate water. Pump out bilges on boats.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and keep appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.
- Cover skin with clothing or repellent.
- Wear shoes, socks, and long pants & long-sleeves. (This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.)
- Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always read label directions carefully. Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months of age.
- Cover doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of the house. Repair broken screens on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

TIPS ON REPELLENT USE

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET are generally recommended. These products are generally available at local pharmacies.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is appropriate: DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old, and oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children less than 3 years old.
- Do not allow young children to apply repellent to themselves; have an adult apply it. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing. Do not apply repellent to the eyes or mouth, cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to clothing or gear. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.

The Florida Department of Health continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses. To read frequently asked questions about repellants and mosquito-borne illnesses, visit www.HealthyOkaloosa.com, or call the Environmental Health Division at the OCHD at (850) 833-9247.

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