

After the rains, threat remains

By Thomas Zimmerman 01 August 2018



While flooding doesn't pose a current issue, the heavy rains and pooling water does present another threat: West Nile Virus.

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Now that the flood waters have receded, the worry is over, right?

While flooding doesn't pose a current issue, the heavy rains and pooling water does present another threat: West Nile Virus.

“The heavy rains have left large tracts of stagnant water that will produce an extraordinary number of mosquitoes if not treated quickly,” said Patrick McDonnell, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Secretary. 2018 has seen increased levels of WNV-positive mosquito samples, with WNV-infected mosquitoes and birds found in 48 Pennsylvania counties.

What can you do?

DEP strongly encourages residents to eliminate standing water, where

mosquitoes can breed, from around their homes. Additional tips include:

- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that have collected on your property.
- Pay special attention to discarded tires. Stagnant water in tires is where most mosquitoes breed.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers left outdoors.
- Have clogged roof gutters cleaned every year, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. Roof gutters can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.
- Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use. Stagnant water in a wading pool becomes a place for mosquitoes to breed.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and don't let water stagnate in birdbaths. Both provide breeding habitats for domestic mosquitoes.
- Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish. Water gardens can become major mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools not in use. A swimming pool left untended by a family on vacation for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers.

It is not necessary to limit any outdoor activities, unless local officials advise you otherwise. However, you can and should try to reduce your risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. In addition to reducing stagnant water in your yard, make sure all windows and doors have screens, and that all screens are in good repair. If West Nile virus is found in your area, here are some ways you can protect yourself.

- Take normal steps to prevent insect bites.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are most active.
- Consider the use of mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors. Wash all treated skin and clothing when returning indoors.

For more information visit <http://www.westnile.state.pa.us/>

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