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NEWS

SEDGWICK COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
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PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS BY REDUCING MOSQUITO POPULATIONS

(Sedgwick County, Kan.) – The recent wet weather was welcomed by Sedgwick County mosquitoes, who were still struggling to rebuild their population following a late winter and drought conditions. They also are looking forward to a sea of fresh food when crowds gather in celebration of Riverfest this week.

Yes, mosquito season has begun and the recent rain, while welcomed, has created more breeding grounds for these pesky insects. And, as if the itchy red bumps they leave behind after selfishly feeding on their unsuspecting victims weren't bad enough, mosquitoes can spread diseases like West Nile virus (WNV) to humans and heartworms to our pets.

In 2012, the Sedgwick County Health Department confirmed 51 cases of WNV in Sedgwick County. Symptoms of WNV include fever, headache, body aches and sometimes a skin rash, and less than 1 percent of people infected develop severe symptoms, including headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis. A human vaccine is not available.

You can help prevent the spread of West Nile virus and other diseases by following the three Ds: drain, dress and DEET.

Drain

Mosquito populations are mostly home grown, so the Sedgwick County Health Department is asking (human) residents to help stop the spread of these diseases by eliminating standing water, which is where mosquitoes breed. Rain water, sprinklers and the like can create pools of standing water in places like bird baths, gutters, empty pots, pet dishes, on top of tarps and in tire swings. If these items don't drain or the water doesn't evaporate quickly, empty the water or replace it every couple of days.

Dress

Cover your skin with clothing when you are outdoors, especially during the dawn and dusk hours; wear long sleeves, pants, socks and shoes that cover all of your foot.

DEET

Use insect repellent that contains DEET. Follow label instructions and avoid over-application.

More information about West Nile virus and reducing the mosquito population, including a downloadable poster, can be found on the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.

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