



# *Parish of Ascension*

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ  
Parish President

## **Local Mosquitoes Test Positive for West Nile Virus, Parish Officials Warn**

**Contact: Lester Kenyon (225) 621-5753; E-mail: [lkenyon@apgov.us](mailto:lkenyon@apgov.us)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 17, 2012**

GONZALES – Residents of Ascension Parish and surrounding areas are at an increased threat for the West Nile Virus this summer, according to parish officials.

David Matassa, director of the Ascension Parish Mosquito Control Department, said the infection rate for Southern House Mosquitoes in the parish is higher than last year at this time.

The surveillance section of the mosquito control department traps and has mosquitoes tested every week at the L.S.U. Arbovirus Laboratory to determine the threat of West Nile throughout our parish. This high tech method is a well-advanced radar screen used in locating the virus and trying to prevent human infection.

According to a publication from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, there are ten confirmed human cases in Louisiana. There have been no human cases of West Nile in Ascension Parish so far this year, Matassa said.

Mosquitoes become infected with West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), Saint Louis Encephalitis (SLE) or other mosquito borne viruses when they bite wild birds which are infected with the disease. If a mosquito bites an infected bird and later bites a person, it can transmit the disease to that person. People do not get WNV, EEE, or SLE from contact with wild birds or horses, he said.

Health officials characterize West Nile infections three ways: neuroinvasive, West Nile fever and asymptomatic. A neuroinvasive illness is severe and typically results in the swelling of the brain or spinal cord. People with this illness are at risk for brain damage or

#

death. West Nile fever is less severe with most people only suffering mild, flu-like other symptoms. Asymptomatic individuals, or those showing no signs of the disease, were never ill and were only discovered to have the West Nile virus in their blood when blood work was done for some other reason, such as blood donation

Wild birds, which may be infected with WNV, EEE, or SLE frequently visit bird feeders and often seek water in bird baths and other items around homes. Cardinals (Red Birds) and House Sparrows are frequently infected with WNV in the Ascension Parish area, Matassa said.

The immature stages of mosquitoes, especially Southern House Mosquitoes and Asian Tiger Mosquitoes which can transmit West Nile Virus, develop in water filled containers around homes and businesses. Recent rain events have provided numerous breeding sites around homes and businesses.

Matassa said emptying water filled containers will greatly reduce the risk of WNV and other mosquito borne diseases by eliminating mosquito breeding sources. Mosquito control personnel are urging residents to check around their home and locate and empty water filled containers every week. Other precautions include:

- Keep mosquitoes out of the home by repairing torn window screens and eliminating cracks around doors and windows.
- Avoid activity around dusk and dawn (this is when many mosquito species are most active).
- Wear long sleeve shirts and long pants when outdoors during peak mosquito activity periods.
- Wear repellents when outdoors during times when mosquitoes are active.

Residents may call Ascension Parish Mosquito Control at 225-621-9613 for assistance with any mosquito related problems.

#