Mosquito Surveillance and Control in Pittsfield

This Spring and Summer, in the City of Pittsfield, the Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project (BCMCP) will be actively conducting mosquito control activities. By monitoring the larvae and adult mosquito population, BCMCP is able to confirm the presence of two mosquito borne viruses, West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and determine high-risk regions within the city.

In recent summers, WNV and EEE has been present in the mosquito population in the city of Pittsfield. These are viruses found in perching songbirds in freshwater swamps or urban environments. The virus is spread through a population of birds through the bite of a mosquito. These viruses can become more prevalent in an area through interactions between infected birds and infected mosquitoes. Species of mosquitoes that bite birds and mammals indiscriminately can transmit the virus from the bird population to humans and domestic animals.

Personal protection is the best defense against mosquito borne illness:

- When outdoors, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and socks.
- Use a repellent with DEET according to the instructions on the product label
- Keep mosquitoes out of your house by repairing holes in screens and making sure screens fit tightly to doors and windows
- Schedule outdoor events to avoid the hours between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active

Remove areas of standing water around your home to eliminate sources of mosquito breeding

- Mosquitoes can begin to multiply in any puddle or standing water that last for more than four days.
- Change the water in birdbaths every few days
- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use
- Clean clogged roof gutters, remove leaves and debris that may prevent drainage of rain water.
- Remove standing water from pool covers
- Look around outside your house for containers and other things that might collect water and turn them over, regularly empty them, or dispose of them.

Surveillance and Response:
The most effective way to control the mosquito population and prevent the spread of vector carrying disease is through larvae surveillance and management. BCMCP will utilize the Integrated Mosquito Management program as a method to reduce the need for Adulticide spray application in specified Berkshire County regions. Larvicide applications and source reduction (reducing breeding habitat by physical means) are employed throughout the mosquito breeding season to reduce the overall population size. Adulticide applications may be employed during the months of June through September to specifically target adult mosquito populations and aim to remove older mosquitoes from the population as they are more likely to be infected and spread the virus.
Thoroughly analyzing and testing the mosquito population throughout the season for virus is critical to understanding the potential risk to the population associated with each disease. An automated mapping system, ARC Geographic Information System Technology, enables personnel the use of hand held devices while conducting surveillance in the field. The information generated from this tool helps BCMCP measure, identify, and record surveillance and plan treatment strategies.

The Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project (BCMCP) Superintendent and the Pittsfield Board of Health will work closely throughout the Spring and Summer months on prevention, surveillance, communication and intervention activities. In Pittsfield, the decision to spray is based upon a phased response to surveillance data and an elevated risk of virus exposure; spraying requires Board of Health approval.

Upon BOH approval, notification of spray dates and specific locations is done 2-3 days in advance via newspaper press release, www.cityofpittsfield.org and the CodeRed emergency notification system.

Scheduled spraying is done after dusk when mosquitoes are most active, people are inside and bees are dormant. Exposure to the insecticide can be reduced by staying indoors during spraying. There are otherwise no special precautions that should be taken. The product used in the truck mounted spray application breaks down quickly and does not leave a toxic residue. The US EPA has evaluated the products for their safety in mosquito control and determined that they do not pose an unreasonable risk to birds or mammals. It is not used where fish could be exposed.

If residents want to take extra steps to avoid exposure to the spray product:
- Close windows and doors and turn off air conditioners on the street side of property
- Stay inside during application period
- Rinse homegrown produce with water
- Remove laundry from clotheslines

**Exclusions from Pesticide Application**
Residents may request to be excluded from wide area truck-mounted pesticide application by submitting an Exclusion Request Form which can be obtained at [http://mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/pesticides/mosquito/pesticide-application-exclusions.html](http://mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/pesticides/mosquito/pesticide-application-exclusions.html)

If it is not possible to access the automated process, a hard copy form can be provided by BCMCP. Exclusion requests may be submitted at any time of the year and will take effect 14 days after the request is made. All requests will expire Dec 31st in the calendar year in which they are received. The resident requesting an exclusion shall mark the area to be excluded according to approved exclusion marking methods (information is available at the website noted above).
For more information:

- Berkshire County Mosquito Control Project at 413-447 9808
  website: https://www.berkshiremosquito.org/
- The City of Pittsfield Health Department/Board of Health 413-499-9411
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health website: https://www.mass.gov/mosquito-borne-diseases