



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**PUBLIC ASKED TO HELP STATE EFFORTS TO
PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES**

HONOLULU – To date, Hawai'i remains free of Dengue Fever and West Nile Virus, two diseases that are caused by the bite of an infected mosquito. Reducing mosquitoes can help prevent and control these diseases if they enter Hawai'i. The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is reminding residents to take simple steps to control mosquito populations around their home and properties.

Because mosquitoes breed in standing water, the first and best practice is to remove items or places where water collects, such as old tires, empty flower pots, buckets, and old toys. Bromeliads can collect water in their crowns, but if they are flushed out every week, mosquito larvae can be prevented from hatching.

So far, Hawai'i has been spared most mosquito-borne illness. There was a small outbreak of Dengue Fever in 2001-2002. But it was quickly contained by the State Vector Control Program and vigilant public efforts that helped control mosquito breeding areas.

"We want to educate the public about the potential threat of mosquito borne diseases being established in our state, and ask for their help in controlling mosquito populations," said Laurence Lau, deputy director of the DOH Environmental Health Administration. "The lives of residents and visitors would change drastically if either of these diseases were established here. In other parts of the world that have West Nile or Dengue, people must cover themselves with clothing or use mosquito repellants to avoid becoming ill from a disease transmitted by mosquitoes. We want to prevent that from happening in Hawai'i."

(more)

Mosquito-borne diseases are on the rise on both the U.S. mainland and in Southeast Asia. In 2006, a reported 4,269 cases were identified on the mainland, including 1,459 brain infections and 177 deaths. In Asia, there has been an alarming rise in Dengue Fever, with thousands of reported cases sweeping through the tropical countries. In Indonesia, for example, more than 100,000 infections have been reported so far this year. If you are traveling to the mainland United States or any area outside of Hawai'i that has mosquitoes, be sure to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

Currently, there is no cure or human vaccine for either Dengue Fever or West Nile Virus. Some people who are infected may not experience any symptoms while for others, symptoms can range from mild to severe – even proving fatal in some instances.

Besides infecting humans, West Nile Virus infects certain species of birds; dead birds may indicate the disease is present. The public should call 211 to report a dead bird so that tests on appropriate species can determine whether West Nile is present. If the condition of the bird raises concern, it will be taken to the State Laboratories for further testing.

The following websites offer additional information on West Nile, Dengue and information needed when reporting a dead bird:

- Department of Health
www.hawaii.gov/health
- Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov
- World Health Organization
www.who.int
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (to report dead birds on-line)
www.gotdeadbird.org

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