



The sting of summer

Local mosquito population up 300 percent due to rainfall

By Ricardo Kaulesar
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If it seems like you're scratching more mosquito bites than usual this summer, it's not your imagination.

Ten inches of rain fell on Hudson County in the month of June, according to the American Association of State Climatologists, and the abnormally wet conditions are causing mosquitoes to multiply many times faster. That has put the Hudson Regional Mosquito and Vector Control Unit on constant alert. The division, a part of the Hudson Regional Health Commission based in Secaucus, is responsible for implementing environmental control programs within a county with a population of over 620,000 people.

The unit is supervised by Dr. Gregory Williams, who says that this year, there has been at least a 300 percent increase in the amount of adult mosquitoes that the unit's four inspectors have collected.

Their traps at various locations across the county from Bayonne to North Bergen enable the inspectors to study the species of mosquitoes present and their quantity.

"Our inspectors can barely keep up with the amount of mosquitoes we have trapped this year," Williams said. "Where we would average 10 mosquitoes a night around this time last

year, now we would find 75 mosquitoes a night."

Besides dealing with the increase in mosquitoes, the Mosquito and Vector Control Unit is the county's first line of defense against the various diseases that mosquitoes have been known to transmit, such as Eastern equine encephalitis and the deadly West Nile virus.

The mosquitoes pick up diseases when they sting an infected animal and carry the virus in their system.

Williams said there have been no cases of West Nile virus discovered in Hudson County this year, and there have only been two cases in the county in the past 10 years.

Keeping them under control

The life cycle of a mosquito starts as larva, which usually grows in five to seven days to an adult insect. Each adult mosquito lays one to two thousand eggs, and lives at most two weeks.

In order to survive, mosquitoes (especially females) suck blood from people and other animals as part of their eating and breeding habits.

Much of the work of the Mosquito and Vector Control Unit is to find larvae at various sites and treat them with a larvicide, a chemical con-

MOSQUITO *from cover*

control agent that destroys mosquitoes in their early stages. Other types of control include helicopter spraying at different locations across Hudson County, such as the marsh in Liberty State Park in Jersey City on Freedom Way, and the wilderness areas west of Meadowlands Parkway between the NJ Transit Bergen Line and NJ Transit Main Line in Secaucus.

Many of these sites are wet almost all year,

rain and not enough hot weather, so there is water that just stays and stagnates.”

Williams also said the best kind of control comes from the public. That means emptying out that container or spare tire lying around the backyard. Those items can fill with rainwater that attracts mosquitoes.

“The more the public police their backyard, the better,” Williams said.

To keep them away, Williams recommends wearing light-colored clothing and using a repellent such as DEET, Picaridin and IR3535.

The number of mosquitoes has multiplied by 300 percent this summer, officials say.

which Williams says makes them the perfect breeding conditions for the 28 different species of mosquitoes that exist in Hudson County. But he said the recent rainy months have created a situation where there are many more places for the little buggers to grow.

“Normally, you’ll have rain in the summer and then because of the heat, spots like potholes where water would gather will dry up,” Williams said. “But there has been so much

If you’ve got information about where mosquitoes may be breeding, the main number for the Hudson Regional Health Commission is (201) 223-1133. □

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KEEPING CONTROL – Mosquitoes found in Hudson County are being battled by the Hudson Regional Mosquito and Vector Control Unit.