

# Flood waters could affect mosquito population

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THE OBSERVER

With floodwaters rising, an increase in the mosquito population has become an issue county health departments are preparing for.

The Hudson County Regional Health Commission is sending their team out to monitor any spikes in numbers.

Although it is too early to determine the major effects high flood waters would have on the number of mosquitoes in the area, an increase must be anticipated, according to John Sarnas of the Kearny Health Department.

"It is too early to say in relation to the number of mosquitoes, but we can anticipate an increase

in western New Jersey from what they call flood water mosquitoes as they lay eggs on dry land and they become activated in flood conditions," said Sarnas.

A majority of mosquitoes, who are mostly feared because of their capability to foster and transmit the West Nile Virus, lay their eggs in sitting water, according to Dr. Greg Williams, program coordinator for the Mosquito and Vector Control Unit at the Hudson Regional Health Commission.

The commission has a number of inspectors, which sporadically go throughout Hudson County and 'spot' check sitting, or stalemate waters.

"We will check ponds in a

park, roadside water, anywhere throughout every municipality," said Williams. "By this we can tell and see how bad things are getting and if numbers are increasing. The bulk of our program is to prevent the eggs from hatching."

Williams adds there are certain mosquitoes that will emerge after big rains but water needs to be sitting for at least two weeks for most eggs to be laid and hatch.

"It is fairly simple: The more water, the more mosquitoes," said Williams.

The commission also uses surveillance light traps designed to catch mosquitoes. When they are caught, the team will test them to

see if they are carrying any diseases or viruses.

"This is something that is always a constant problem because of all the water in this region," said Williams. "Usually we will see one mosquito out of a thousand carrying the virus."

The virus will affect people differently. Some can get bit by an infected mosquito and never have any symptoms from the virus, according to Williams. The most common one is flu-like symptoms.

Since 2003, when two cases of West Nile in humans were found in Kearny and North Bergen, there have been no reported cases. As of June 27, there have been no reported human, animal

or mosquito cases of the West Nile Virus, according to the U.S. Center of Disease Control Prevention.

•Tips to avoid mosquito exposure and reproduction near your home, according to Williams:

•Do not leave any standing water, such as neglected pools or water in flowerpots.

•Try to stay indoors during peak hours such as before dusk and after dawn.

•When you are out, avoid marshlands.

•Wear long sleeves whenever possible.

•The protective repellent DEET is recommended by the Hudson Regional Health Commission to prevent bites.