
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Health Department Launches Mosquito Surveillance.
Annual Hunt for West Nile Virus Expands to Seek Zika Carrier**

Grand Rapids –The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is once again launching its annual study and surveillance for mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus. Now through Labor Day, KCHD will place, monitor and maintain 10 mosquito traps in the following neighborhoods: Garfield Park, Roosevelt, Eastown, Midtown, West Grand, Belknap Lookout, Westside Connection and Alger Heights. The goal is to monitor pools of mosquitoes for early disease detection and prevention, specifically West Nile Virus (WNV).

“We have selected these areas because they have been hot spots for the West Nile Virus in the past,” said Sara Simmonds, Supervising Sanitarian with the department’s Environmental Health division. “Given our past experience, we fully expect that we will find West Nile Virus in our community. Early detection is critical to help people protect themselves from contracting the virus.”

The trap, called a Gravid trap, (photos attached) lures pregnant female mosquitoes by creating a false breeding environment. A pungent bait of grass clippings and yeast fools the insects by attracting them with carbon dioxide, a gas found in the exhaled breath of mammals. Mosquitoes end up sucked into a nylon net by a battery operated fan. Each week trapped mosquitoes will be returned to KCHD where they will be pulverized and tested for West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses. Results will be logged along with geographic information that will provide a nearly real time picture to health authorities.

In partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), KCHD will also be monitoring for mosquitos that are not known to exist in Kent County, *Aedes Albopictus* and *Aedes Aegypti* species. These species of mosquito are known to carry the Zika Virus. It is highly unlikely that these species will surface in Kent County. Two Sentinel traps, provided by MDHHS, are specifically designed to attract these mosquitoes. The data collected will be used to establish a national map to depict the species range.

West Nile Virus was first detected in the United States in 1999. Since the first case was diagnosed in Michigan in 2001 more than 1100 people have been diagnosed with the disease. 92 people have died. In 2001 and again in 2012 Kent County had the second highest number of West Nile cases in the state. More about West Nile Virus can be found [here](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/). <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/>

The best treatment for any mosquito borne illness is prevention. KCHD recommends wearing a mosquito repellent that contains 10 – 35% DEET, wearing light colored clothing and staying indoors during dusk. More information about prevention can be found [here](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/CommDisease/pdfs/westnile_qa.pdf). https://www.accesskent.com/Health/CommDisease/pdfs/westnile_qa.pdf

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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