



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2024

FAYETTE COUNTY ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO ‘FIGHT THE BITE’

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette-Washington Mosquito-Borne Disease Program has officially begun its 2024 tick and mosquito surveillance season, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Program Coordinator Ken Hess said, while most insects provide beneficial effects – such as being part of the food web or acting as plant pollinators – ticks and mosquitoes can become “a biting nuisance” or, more importantly, transmit diseases that can make humans sick.

“Each week, the Fayette-Washington Mosquito-Borne Disease Program collects environmental samples of tick and mosquito populations from our communities to assess disease transmission potential,” Hess said. “Communities with mosquito and tick populations showing elevated disease risks are proactively targeted with control measures and personal protection education.”

The DEP funds the collection, testing and control of tick and mosquito populations through grants, and uses the collected data to publish seasonal risk values statewide. Hess said citizens may see his team of biologists collecting insects this season by “dragging a white cloth along the edge of local parks or setting mosquito traps.”

“This is being done to measure the risk of tick and mosquito populations transmitting diseases in Fayette and Washington counties. While our agency actively monitors tick and mosquito populations, all residents in our community have a shared responsibility to reduce habitats for these insects,” he said. “We encourage the reduction of standing water and the creation of a tick-safe zone around your property.”

As residents spend more time outdoors this summer, the Fayette-Washington Mosquito-Borne Disease Program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the following precautions to prevent bites from mosquitoes and ticks:

- Insect repellent, when used properly, can keep mosquitoes and ticks off your skin. Now we recommend using repellents that are EPA approved that contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Adults should help apply repellents to children under 12.
- Wear long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and socks to keep bugs off your skin.
- Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors, even in your own yard. Inspect all parts of your body carefully, including your armpits, scalp, and groin. Remove ticks immediately using fine-tipped tweezers.

- Early morning, late afternoon, and early evening are peak biting times for mosquitoes that spread West Nile Virus. It's especially important to use repellent if you're outdoors at these times.
- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in water, even in small containers. Walk around the outside of your home at least once a week and empty any water that's collected in toys, pet food and water bowls, birdbaths, buckets, and other objects. Check under bushes and other hard-to-see places. Get rid of old tires and other objects that can collect water.
- Create a tick-safe zone around your home. For example, remove leaf litter and clear grasses and brush around your home and the edge of the lawn, and place mulch between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks off the places you work and play the most.
- Check for and repair holes in window and door screens.
- Avoiding mosquitoes and ticks doesn't mean that you have to stay inside. Work and play outside but remember to apply an effective repellent to exposed skin and clothing.

To learn more about the Fayette-Washington Mosquito-Borne Disease Program, contact Ken Hess at khess@fayettepa.org or 724-970-8686.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Kassimer Harper, Public Relations Specialist, at 724-437-4571, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info Kaylie Glaze, Community Relations Coordinator, at 724-430-1200 Ext. 1611, kmoore@fayettepa.org.