

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**August 16, 2016**

**DEP update on Zika surveillance and response**

Wilkes-Barre, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has released results of surveillance for *Aedes* mosquitoes, which have been found to be vectors of the Zika virus. At this time, there have not been any cases of Zika transmitted locally in Pennsylvania, nor have mosquitoes tested positive for the virus.

Twenty-six counties in Pennsylvania have active surveillance sites for *albopictus* mosquitoes, commonly known as Asian Tiger mosquitoes. The mosquitoes are predominantly found in southern and eastern counties. There have not been any specimens of *Aedes aegypti* collected, which are the primary carrier of Zika in South America. *Aedes aegypti* have not been found in Pennsylvania since 2002.

Counties conducting surveillance and approximate locations can be found beginning on page 15 of the DEP/PA Department of Health [Zika Response Plan](http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/U-Z/Zikavirus/Documents/Pennsylvania%20Zika%20Virus%20Response%20Plan.pdf). Surveillance statistics for the week ending July 30, 2016 are below.

In addition, in early August, DEP and the Philadelphia Health Department and the Chester County Health Department responded to two imported clusters of travel associated Zika virus cases per the protocols outlined in the  [Zika Response Plan](http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/U-Z/Zikavirus/Documents/Pennsylvania%20Zika%20Virus%20Response%20Plan.pdf).  Mosquitoes collected in the Philadelphia cluster response activities were tested for Zika and all samples came back negative. Mosquito trapping in Chester County did not find significant populations of the Asian tiger mosquito and samples were not tested.

“The surveillance and cluster response by DEP and county governments has gone exactly to the Zika response plan, and I am pleased to note that there is no evidence of the Zika virus being carried by mosquitoes in Pennsylvania,” said acting DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “I want to continue to encourage residents to take common-sense actions like wearing insect repellant and eliminating standing water to cut down on mosquito activity.”

In northeast PA, surveillance in Lehigh County has found pest levels of Aedes albopictus during the last week of July (Pest levels are defined as greater than 24 female *Aedes albopictus* per trapping event).  Aedes albopictus has been found in Northampton County, but the pest levels haven’t been observed. Surveillance in Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Monroe counties began on August 8, 2016.

DEP recommends that residents do simple activities to reduce mosquito activity in their areas:

         Dispose of cans, buckets, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or similar containers that hold water.

         Properly dispose of discarded tires that can collect water. Stagnant water is where most mosquitoes breed.

         Drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers.

         Have clogged roof gutters cleaned every year as the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug drains.

         Turn over wheelbarrows and plastic wading pools when not in use and don't let water stagnate in birdbaths.

         Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish.

         Clean and chlorinate swimming pools not in use and remove any water that may collect on pool covers.

         Wear insect repellant during times of mosquito activity. *Aedes* mosquitoes are active during daylight hours

         Keep doors and windows tightly closed, or ensure that screens do not have holes or tears that can allow mosquitoes to get inside the house

“These mosquitoes are weak fliers, so if you see them, they are likely breeding nearby,” said Matt Helwig, program specialist in DEP’s Vector Management program. “Simple precautions to eliminate potential habitat and avoid contact can lead to a safe and itch-free summer.”

To read the [Zika Response Plan click here](http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/U-Z/Zikavirus/Documents/Pennsylvania%20Zika%20Virus%20Response%20Plan.pdf).

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