

Multi-Agency News Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 18, 2015

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Vector Control Agencies to Step up Efforts Against Invasive Mosquitoes

Natural, chemical-free method added to ongoing control efforts to take the fight straight to Asian tiger mosquitoes

South El Monte, Calif. – Residents in the city of South El Monte may experience a little more relief from dangerous, invasive Asian tiger mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*). In collaboration with the University of Kentucky and the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District (SGVMVCD), the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD) will release sterile, male Asian tiger mosquitoes to reduce the existing infestation in the city.

The Sterile Male Tiger Mosquito Pilot Program will involve releasing the mosquitoes in an impacted South El Monte neighborhood beginning June 23 and will continue through the end of the season in October. Male mosquitoes **do not bite and do not transmit disease**. When released, they will find and mate with female tiger mosquitoes in the area. Eggs laid by these mated females will be sterile and will not hatch, thereby breaking the mosquito life cycle.

The pilot project will begin in a 5.7 acre area between the streets of Weaver St. to the north; Santa Anita Ave to the east; Enloe Street to the south; and Central Ave to the west. Residents in the pilot area may see more flying mosquitoes, but, since the sterile mosquitoes are all males, they will not get more bites. The sterile male mosquitoes are not expected to fly outside of the pilot area. The population of tiger mosquitoes in this pilot area is projected to decline significantly through the summer months. The districts hopes to expand this program to other areas in the future.

In addition to the sterile male releases, vector control officials will continue to actively monitor and control invasive species wherever they are found. These efforts include yard inspections in residential neighborhoods, source reduction in public areas, and educational outreach programs in schools and communities.

The Need

The presence of invasive Asian tiger mosquitoes increases the risk of residents being exposed to exotic diseases such as dengue and chikungunya. These viruses are currently not transmitted locally, but travel-related cases occur annually in Los Angeles County.

“It’s not a matter of if, but when we will see local transmission of these debilitating diseases,” says Susanne Kluh, Scientific-Technical Services Director for GLACVCD. “It takes just one traveler infected with chikungunya or dengue fever to be bitten by the invasive mosquito to start local transmission.”

The GLACVCD and the SGVMVCD have been working together since 2011 to control Asian tiger mosquitoes. Since then, the infestation has been detected in 15 communities in and around the San Gabriel Valley.

The Asian tiger mosquito currently poses a larger threat compared to the other two invasive *Aedes* mosquitoes – yellow fever mosquito and Australian backyard mosquito – since it is the most pervasive in L.A. County. These mosquitoes are excellent at colonizing new areas, and vector control officials warn that they could be anywhere in the county.

These invasive *Aedes* are able to lay eggs on the walls of small containers, including buckets, plant saucers, and even in recyclables that can hold standing water. Their ability to adapt to urban environments makes them extremely difficult to control in cities around the world.

“Our focus is to suppress populations of these mosquitoes wherever they are detected and to limit their expansion into surrounding cities,” says Dr. Wakoli Wekesa, Scientific Program Manager at the SGVMVCD. “It’s critical that we utilize all the tools and resources available to us – from traditional management techniques to the latest, environmentally-friendly technology – to combat this urban threat.”

The vector control agencies are calling upon all residents to do their part:

- REPORT any sightings of small, black-and-white mosquitoes, or if you are being bitten by mosquitoes during the day! Residents can contact GLACVCD at 562-944-9656 or online at www.ReportMosquitoes.org. Or contact SGVMVCD at 626-814-9466.
- Dump and drain all water around your home. Eliminate plant saucers and other unnecessary containers and thoroughly scrub outdoor pet water dishes and bird baths weekly to remove eggs.
- Do not transport or share plant stems rooted in water which may carry eggs. Do not keep outdoor buckets full of water.
- Use insect repellent that contain CDC-recommended active ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, para-menthane diol, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to avoid bites.

For more information please visit the districts’ websites at www.glacvcd.org and www.sgvmosquito.org.

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