Williamson County and Cities Health District Expands 2015 Mosquito Testing To Northern Williamson County

The Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) is expanding its annual mosquito testing program into northern Williamson County to monitor the threat of mosquito-borne illnesses. The Integrated Mosquito Management Program (IMMP) will add the cities of Jarrell, Granger, and Florence to the list of areas that are tested weekly. Between May and November, WCCHD actively monitors mosquitoes for arbovirus infections, including the West Nile Virus and Chikungunya. The IMMP is a comprehensive management strategy to trap and test mosquitoes every week, identify and monitor mosquitoes that carry arboviruses, and alert and educate citizens about personal protection. An IMMP Program Specialist sets mosquito traps at locations throughout the county, submits the specimens to the Texas Department of State Health Services for testing, and uses geographic information systems (GIS) to monitor mosquito populations.

WCCHD Assistant Deputy Director Deborah Marlow says, “Our expansion into Northern Williamson County this year will give us more data to monitor the threat of mosquito-borne illnesses. We are still concerned about the West Nile Virus because it is a local mosquito borne disease and we will also monitor travel related mosquito diseases like Chikungunya.”

Mosquito test results can vary year to year due to a variety of factors including the weather, the number of birds and mosquitoes that maintain and spread arboviruses, and human behavior. In Williamson County, the mosquito season can last until the first hard freeze of winter. In 2012, WCCHD reported twelve confirmed West Nile Neuroinvasive Disease (WND) cases, including one confirmed death. No cases were reported in 2013, but in 2014, there was one reported WND case in Williamson County. WCCHD will continue to educate the public through the Fight the Bite campaign, a public education initiative with tips on how to stay safe during the peak hours of mosquito activity. Fight The Bite encourages public awareness of the Four D’s:

• Dawn and Dusk are the times to try to stay indoors since mosquitoes are most active at those times
• Dress in long sleeves and pants when outdoors
• Drain standing water in flower pots, pet dishes, or clogged gutters so mosquitoes cannot lay eggs
• Defend using an EPA-approved insect repellant

The Integrated Mosquito Management Program is funded and supported locally by the county and participating cities in Williamson County. For information and updates on the West Nile Virus and mosquito monitoring and control efforts in Williamson County, go to www.wcchd.org. For statewide information, go to the Texas Department of State Health Services website at www.dshs.state.tx.us.