



MEDIA RELEASE

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Onslow County in the Midst of Vector-Borne Disease Season

(*Onslow County*) – Longer days, warmer temperatures, summer rains, and outside activities are perfect conditions for fun with family and friends, but they also are perfect conditions for mosquitos, ticks, and fleas, which can transmit disease. The Onslow County Health Department Communicable Disease section urges residents and visitors to protect themselves from bites from these insects, which is the best way to avoid getting a vector-borne disease.

“We have seen a few probable cases of Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever this spring and summer, and we know from past cases that some ticks and mosquitos in our area carry these diseases,” explained Jacob Farnsworth, Interim Communicable Disease Nurse Manager at the Onslow County Health Department. “Humans contract Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever when they are bitten by an infected tick. Also possible in our area are some diseases caused from mosquito bites, like West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis.”

Millions of people world-wide are affected by vector-borne illnesses every year, including hundreds of thousands of Americans. Some of these diseases originated in the United States, but some were brought here through travel.

When people travel to different parts of the world, they may be exposed to a disease, which they then bring back home. For example, as its name suggests, West Nile Virus, which primarily affects birds, did not begin in the United States. In 1999, the U.S. had its first case. In 2012, the U.S. had 5,674 cases, which means that the disease is now being transmitted by local mosquitos.

“The Onslow County Health Department has a new clinic that provides travelers with vaccinations and medications to keep them safe when they are in other countries where they may be exposed to diseases that are not common in the United States. People can call 910-347-2154, option 2, to schedule an appointment to discuss their travel plans with a nurse to see if they need any vaccines or medications that will help to keep them healthy while away from home,” said Farnsworth.

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“Vector-borne diseases are hard to eliminate because it is so difficult to get rid of all of the ticks, mosquitos, and fleas. To make these diseases even more complicated, almost all vector-borne diseases can live in animals and humans, which makes them widespread,” added Farnsworth.

According to Farnsworth, “The best way to avoid a vector-borne illness is to not get bitten by an infected tick or mosquito. There are precautions that people can take to keep themselves and their families safe.”

To avoid mosquito bites, people can do activities inside during peak mosquito times, ensure there is no standing water around their homes, wear long sleeves and pants while outside, and use insect repellent.

To avoid tick bites, stay out of areas where ticks thrive, use repellent, keep a tidy yard, and shower and check yourself, children, and pets if any of you have been in an area where ticks are common. If you do find a tick, detach it as soon as possible.

If you have been bitten by a tick or mosquito and develop symptoms of a vector-borne illness, contact your medical provider. Symptoms include fever, chills, aches, pains, or rash.

For more information, call the Onslow County Health Department at 910-347-2154 or visit www.onslowcountync.gov/health or www.cdc.gov.

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