

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2003

Contact: Bill Parizek
850-245-4111

**DOH URGES THE PUBLIC TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST
MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES**

--FOLLOW THE FIVE D'S TO LIMIT EXPOSURE--

TALLAHASSEE-Today, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) reissued its prevention message for Florida's residents and visitors to protect themselves against mosquito-borne diseases.

"While the chance of humans contracting a mosquito-borne disease is low, we still need to take precautions against mosquito bites," said DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A. "As Florida moves into its warm season, these precautions will be key to limiting the spread of mosquito-borne diseases to humans."

Mosquito-borne infections in people such as EEE, St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) and West Nile (WN) virus can cause headache, fever, dizziness, confusion, movement disorders and coma. The state monitors animals as sentinels for these arboviruses, to determine if any of the viruses are present in the community.

The best defense against these viruses is prevention. Dr. Jake Rutherford, Monroe County Health Department Director, sums up prevention with the "5 D's"

- **Dusk and Dawn** (avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood, for many species this is during the dusk and dawn hours)
- **Dress** (wear clothing that covers skin)
- **DEET** (use mosquito repellents including DEET [N, N diethyl-*m*-toluamide] on skin or pyrethrins on clothing when you are outside)
- **Drainage** (check your home to rid it of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs).

Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.

- MORE -

PREVENTION

Page 2

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites (con't)

- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

For more information on WN virus, EEE and SLE, visit DOH's Bureau of Epidemiology's Web site at http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/htopics/arbo/index.htm or call the Bureau's hotline at 1-888-880-5782 for recorded information.

Additionally, information on these arboviruses can be found at the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' website, <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai.html>, or by calling (850) 410-0900. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission maintains a website for reporting wild bird die offs related to West Nile Virus. To report a suspected case, visit: <http://wld.fwc.state.fl.us/bird>.