

# **Treeways**

**2015 - 7**

## **Mosquito-Borne Diseases**

Yes, mosquito-borne diseases do occur in east central Minnesota. West Nile Encephalitis and LaCrosse Encephalitis are viral illnesses that are transmitted to people via the bite of an infected mosquito. The primary vector of LaCrosse encephalitis is the Eastern Tree Hole mosquito, *Ochlerotatus triseriatus*, and West Nile encephalitis may be transmitted by one or more species of mosquito. Most people that become infected with either West Nile or Lacrosse encephalitis either have no symptoms or a mild flu-like illness. A small percentage of people, especially elderly patients, may develop brain inflammation (encephalitis) with West Nile and perhaps 10% of these cases are fatal. With LaCrosse encephalitis a small percentage of patients, especially children, develop brain inflammation and of these perhaps 1-3% are fatal and another 15% develop long-term nervous system problems.

Symptoms typically include headache, fever, nausea, lethargy, stiff neck, and vomiting that may progress into confusion, disorientation, altered reflexes, convulsions, seizures, and coma. There is no treatment other than supportive care.

The best way to prevent these diseases is to remove water-holding items such as waste tires, cans, buckets, or any other container that can hold rainwater to prevent mosquito breeding. The best time to find these mosquito breeding sites is early spring before new vegetation obscures them. Change bird bath water at least weekly, make sure gutters are clear, and fill water-holding tree holes with sand or expanding foam insulation. Wear long-sleeved light colored clothing and use an insect repellent containing DEET. Dawn and dusk are generally the peak feeding times for mosquitoes however the eastern tree-hole mosquito feeds during the day. There are no human vaccines available for either disease at this time. For additional information check online with the Minnesota Department of Health.