



Tri-County Health Department

Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties

Vector Surveillance Program *Frequently Asked Questions*

1. Why doesn't Tri-County Health Department spray for mosquitoes?

Tri-County Health Department's role is education of the public and surveillance of the presence of diseases. Traps are set in locations with the highest historical mosquito activity and regularly monitored for the species of mosquitoes known to carry West Nile Virus (WNV). Those mosquitoes are separated out and sent to the state lab for testing for WNV. If there are surges in the mosquito populations or testing comes back positive for WNV, the local municipality or county agency, which is responsible for the treatment of the area, is notified, and they focus on larvaciding (killing the mosquito before it develops into an adult) as a principle means of controlling the mosquito populations. Only in extreme cases, would there be any need to spray (called adulticiding), as larvaciding has been proven to be the most effective method at controlling mosquitoes.

2. Prairie dogs keep coming into my yard. What do I do?

The responsibility of keeping prairie dogs out of one's property falls on the property owner. There are many different ways of achieving this, most notably fencing the prairie dogs out, with an underground mesh type fence that acts as a barrier between their territory and that of the property owner.

3. Isn't it a "health hazard" when prairie dogs, rabbits, or other small mammals come into my yard?

The only concern of a "health hazard" with apparently healthy, mobile small mammals is that of potential flea transmission between the animal and you or your pet. It is important to inspect your pets regularly for fleas and treat them accordingly. This is also one of many reasons why humans should wear insect sprays when outdoors.

4. There is standing water on my neighbor's property and it is breeding mosquitoes. What can be done?

Your local municipal code may have an ordinance that can be enforced by a zoning or code compliance officer. Outside of municipalities, it becomes much more difficult to enforce any such action due to lack of enforcement authority. However, education is usually the most effective tool in correcting these issues and the local health department or zoning officer can most often achieve a favorable outcome when educating the individual about the problem.

5. Are "mosquito magnets" beneficial?

Some may argue that these devices work well for eliminating mosquitoes. However, one must be aware that, because they are an attractant, their use may actually be inviting the mosquitoes to your yard. Just because you see a large number of mosquitoes in the trap, doesn't necessarily mean that you have a mosquito problem. You may actually be attracting

more to that area than you would if you didn't have the device. With an increase of mosquitoes in an area, comes an increased risk of mosquito exposure to you.

6. I have an old shed on my property that needs to be cleaned out. Since I live in the metro area, do I really need to be concerned about Hantavirus?

Yes, Hantavirus has been found in the metro area in recent years. It is primarily carried by deer mice, but without knowing what mice have been in your shed, it is best to treat it as if the virus were present in your shed and take necessary precautions. It is most important not to stir up any dust or mouse nesting materials as this would have potential to cause the virus to become airborne which you could easily inhale. Please contact a Tri-County Health Department representative for specific information on cleaning up rodent-infested areas.

7. I have seen several dead birds on my property in the last few days. What do I do?

The Health Department can only test certain birds for West Nile Virus specifically. These birds must be of the Corvid species, which includes jays, crows, ravens, and magpies. You can call the Colorado Helpline at 1-877-462-2911 to report all dead birds. The Helpline can also help you to determine what type of birds they are, and if they would be eligible for testing.

8. I found a dead bat outside my home. Does it need to be tested for rabies?

Generally, if a bat has been found outside a home and has not had any known human or pet interaction, it is not necessary to test the bat for rabies. It is important to dispose of it properly by wearing gloves and using a long-handled shovel to place it in a double bag, then place the bat in an outdoor trash and be sure to wash your hands. If a bat is found inside the home, however, be sure to contact a Tri-County Health Department representative for further information.

9. There have been several dead rabbits near my home lately. Should this be a concern?

This may be a concern if it cannot be determined that the rabbits are being poisoned, shot, or killed by a predator or other means. Depending on the circumstances, the Health Department may be interested in testing the rabbits for plague or tularemia. It is important to avoid possible flea transmission from the dead rabbits, by keeping pets away, wearing an insect repellent and using caution when handling animal carcasses.

10. There is a prairie dog village next to my home, and there haven't been any prairie dogs lately. Is this a concern?

If this has normally been a very active site for prairie dogs and suddenly the activity ceases, this may be a concern. It is important to contact the Health Department, so that surveillance can be done and possible testing of specimens. It is very important to avoid the area and inspect pets regularly for fleas and treat accordingly.

Aurora	Castle Rock	Commerce City	Bellevue East
15400 E. 14 th Pl, Suite 309 Aurora, CO (303) 341-9370	4400 Castleton Ct. Castle Rock, CO (303) 663-7650	4201 E 72 nd Ave. Commerce City, CO (303) 288-6816	7100 E. Bellevue Greenwood Village, CO (303) 783-7133