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DPHSS strategy focuses on four areas to prevent further local transmission of Dengue virus

The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS), along with partner agencies, and the Guam community, continue efforts to mitigate the spread of the dengue virus on Guam.

No new cases were confirmed in the last 24 hours. There remain nine confirmed cases of locally acquired dengue infection and six confirmed cases of imported dengue infection since April 24, 2019. DPHSS continues to receive reports of suspect cases as a result of the department's increased community outreach and timely reporting by Guam healthcare providers.

As a reminder, the dengue virus is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito and cannot spread directly from person-to-person. Anyone who lives in or travels to an area where dengue virus is found can get it from mosquito bites.

“Dengue fever, although not endemic in Guam, propelled the Department of Public Health and Social Services to activate its Public Health Incident Command (PHICC) to prevent the further local transmission of the virus,” said Tom Nadeau, DPHSS Chief Environmental Public Health Officer. “Since the first laboratory confirmed case of locally acquired dengue on Sept. 11, 2019, DPHSS has focused on four areas: mosquito surveillance, population surveillance, mosquito control, and education and outreach. The Incident Management Team of the PHICC meet daily to strategize and gauge our efforts and resources to accomplish our objectives. Ultimately, we need the community's help to fight the dengue virus from further spreading.”

DPHSS Mosquito Surveillance

Since the operation of the Guam Environmental Public Health Laboratory in 2017, the department's Division of Environmental Health (DEH) has been routinely trapping, and identifying adult and larval mosquitoes in Guam. However, with the recent cases of dengue fever in Guam, DEH has shifted and prioritized its resources in responding to the public health event. Sites identified as areas of surveillance, based on the results of DPHSS investigations, are surveilled for mosquitoes through trapping, identification, and testing. The Division also monitors various sites around the island for new mosquito species that may have become introduced.

Population Surveillance

The Department's Division of Public Health has enhanced its dengue fever surveillance by testing, via polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, all suspect dengue cases received from island hospitals and clinics. The increased diligence of island healthcare providers has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of referrals to the Division, which has allowed the department to quickly

identify new cases and direct early response activities. Confirmed cases are investigated by the Division's epidemiology team to obtain further information from the patient to guide appropriate response measures.

Mosquito Control

Sites designated as areas of surveillance are inspected by the staff of the Division of Environmental Health to identify mosquito breeding sites for elimination with the assistance of the residents in the area. Upon receiving consent, homes and surrounding premises located in areas of surveillance are sprayed with pesticide to eliminate adult mosquitoes that may be infected with the dengue virus.

Education and Outreach

The DPHSS Communications Team regularly sends out news releases; educates and empowers the general public in protecting themselves from dengue fever; provides face-to-face education in the prevention and spread of dengue fever; and conducts outreach. The team distributes posters and pamphlets. To date, presentations on dengue basics and dengue clinical management by medical epidemiologist, U.S. Public Health Service Lt. Commander W. Thane Hancock, was attended by more than 1000 people from various community and professional organizations, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

Preventive Measures: Mosquito Control Outside Your Home

- Reduce the number of new mosquitoes that can carry dengue by eliminating the places they lay eggs. Once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out any items that hold water like tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flower pot saucers, or trash containers. Mosquitoes lay eggs near water.
 - Tightly cover water storage containers (buckets, cisterns, rain barrels) so that mosquitoes cannot get inside to lay eggs.
 - For containers without lids, use wire mesh or screens with holes smaller than an adult mosquito. Window and door screens sold at hardware stores have mesh small enough to keep mosquitoes out.
 - Use larvicides to kill larvae in large containers of water that will not be used for drinking and cannot be covered or dumped out.
- If you have a septic tank, repair cracks or gaps. Cover open vent or plumbing pipes. Use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.

Presentation at Merizo Elementary School on Wednesday, Oct. 16

The community is invited to an educational presentation on dengue at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019 at Merizo Elementary School.

For more information, visit <http://dphss.guam.gov/dengue-fever/> or contact DPHSS, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at (671) 735-7159. If there is an emergency, dial 911.


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