

**Letter to the Editor –
Oswego County Urges Residents to Join ‘Fight The Bite’**

To the Editor,

With summer soon upon us, I would like to take this moment to talk about how the Oswego County Health Department is preparing for the upcoming mosquito season. We will begin staff training during the last week of May and move into full surveillance the following week.

As part of a long-term surveillance program, our staff collects mosquito specimens from a number of trap sites around the county. The survey area this year will be the same areas with high mosquito activities last year. Most traps are set in and near hardwood swamp areas because they are a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes, especially the “*Culiseta melanura*” mosquito, the main carrier of Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). Once captured, mosquitoes are identified and grouped by species, gender, and whether or not they have ingested blood. The collection or “pool” of mosquitoes is then sent to the NYS Department of Health laboratory near Albany for testing that same week. The results are usually received one week later.

In 2012, we received special funding to coordinate the Mark-Release-Recapture (MRR) Project which tracks the migration patterns of adult mosquitoes. Due to budget constraints, we will not be able to go on with the project this year; however, we will continue to monitor mosquito populations through traditional surveillance methods.

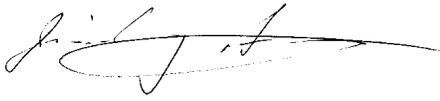
We created educational signs with funds made available from the New York State and procured through the efforts of Senate Senator Patty Ritchie last year. The signs convey information about protecting yourself and your family from mosquito bites. They will be distributed to schools, municipalities, campgrounds, playgrounds and golf courses.

Still, the best defense we have against EEE and the West Nile Virus (WNV) is to guard against mosquito bites. Protect yourself and your family by limiting outside activities from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are more active. If you have to be outside or in areas with mosquitoes, wear shoes, socks, long pants, and long-sleeved shirts as the weather permits. Also, be sure to use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to the directions on the label.

You can also reduce mosquito populations around your home and yard by eliminating or minimizing standing water. Empty or drain pails, flower pots, wheelbarrows, wading pools and pool covers. Drill holes in recycling containers, clear roof gutters, dispose of old tires, and change the water in bird baths and horse troughs twice a week to discourage mosquito breeding. Also, repair or replace broken or torn window and door screens to keep mosquitoes from entering your home.

These are all important steps in the battle against EEE and WNV. Personal protection is the most effective way of preventing EEE, WNV and other insect-borne diseases. Last year, our public health educators launched more than three dozen community outreach activities about EEE and WNV alone. We will continue our efforts to educate people about personal protection methods this year. I, too, will join the educational team to reach out to more organizations and groups throughout the county.

Please contact our department for an educational session about EEE and WNV, be thorough in their personal protection practices and enjoy a safe and happy summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jiancheng Huang', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

By Jiancheng Huang,
Oswego County Public Health Director