PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - August 23, 2002
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New Mosquitos Vexing, Not Deadly

Mosquito traps set Friday night by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department found that most of the mosquitos were not the Culex kind that can carry West Nile Virus. "We wanted to quickly find out what kind of mosquitos the recent rains and standing water had allowed to breed," said Scott Holmes, Chief of the Environmental Public Health Division. Three mosquito traps were set out Friday night in north-central, southwest and southeast Lincoln. "We set one of the traps in an area that we knew had standing water from recent rains," Holmes said. Health Department staff had been out to the site earlier in the week and treated the standing water, but were too late to kill all the mosquito larvae. Many of the larvae at this site grew into adult mosquitoes. The other two traps were set in areas that did not have standing water for comparison.

The mosquitos that were caught were then taken to Dr. Barbara Ogg, Extension Entomologist with UNL Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County. Dr. Ogg carefully examined the mosquitos to determine what percent were of the Culex species. She found that well over 90% of the 800 or so mosquitos caught where there was standing were not Culex. "This is not surprising to me," said Dr. Ogg, "Some species of mosquitos, such as Aedes vexans, lay their eggs in the soil and on plants that are in low lying areas. When it rains, as it did recently in Lincoln, filling the ditches and low lying areas with water, these mosquito eggs begin to grow and hatch into adults in 4 to 7 days." Aedes vexans mosquitos are not known to transmit the West Nile Virus. So, if there can be any "good" mosquitos, the ones that recently hatched following our rains are them." For the two other traps, one caught 13 mosquitos, of which 9 were Culex, and the other caught 15 mosquitoes or which 1 was Culex.

"The extremely low numbers of mosquitos at the other trap sites is reassuring," said Holmes. "Clearly the recent rains have not caused a big increase in Culex mosquitos." The two traps placed in areas without standing water caught very few mosquitos, and the percent Culex is similar to what has been found in July and August trapping done by the State Health and Human Services Department and our staff.

Mosquito trapping will continue through the last part of the summer to monitor the mosquito populations. Trapping will be done on Wednesday evening in six locations around Lincoln. These mosquitos will be tested by the Nebraska Health and Human Services Department for the West Nile Virus. Results of the testing are typically available about one week later.

This information is valid for southeastern Nebraska. It may or may not apply in your area. Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information and resources.