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### **Health department receives dengue survey results, launches educational campaign**

The Monroe County Health Department continued its health advisory regarding dengue fever in Key West and launched an educational campaign this week after receiving final results of a recent survey on the extent of dengue infection in Key West.

Results received at the department late Thursday showed that 99 of the 240 Old Town residents who donated blood to the survey – 41 percent – tested positive for the dengue virus or dengue antibodies, indicating that they had contracted the mosquito-borne illness at some point in their lives.

Of the 99 residents who tested positive for the virus, eight are thought to have contracted the virus in Old Town Key West at some point within the three months preceding the survey.

In addition, a review of local hospital records as part of the survey suggests that some patients admitted as far back as early July may have been experiencing dengue-like symptoms.

The survey was launched after three confirmed cases of dengue surfaced in Old Town Key West in August, the first locally acquired cases of the mosquito-borne illness reported in the state in more than 40 years.

The process of notifying survey participants is underway.

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Florida Department of Health conducted the survey with help from the Monroe County Health Department and the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District from September 23 to 27.

“The results are significant in that they indicate the virus is present in Key West,” Monroe County Health Department Administrator Bob Eadie said. “To protect themselves and their families, individuals need to take responsibility for preventing exposure to this disease. It’s about taking preventive measures without rearranging your daily routine. Many cities in the world suffer from a great deal more exposure to the disease than Key West and yet continue to function normally.”

In addition to the final survey results, the department confirmed that several more individuals had contracted dengue locally – including one in the Stock Island community of Key Haven – in the two months since the survey was conducted. Test results on three additional individuals are pending.

Anyone who reported dengue-like symptoms during and after the survey has fully recovered.

“It’s here, so we need to be extra vigilant with our mosquito control efforts,” Eadie said. “More importantly, it’s about people taking preventive measures themselves. Recommended steps are using insect repellent and installing screens.”

The department is mounting an educational campaign on dengue with emphasis on the importance of individuals avoiding contact with and eliminating potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

The Florida Keys Mosquito Control District has expanded its control measures to include increased aerial and ground spraying and environmental surveys, as well as

working with residents and businesses to locate and dump containers on their properties that hold water where mosquitoes can breed.

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by *Aedes aegypti*, a species of mosquito common to the southeastern United States and the tropics. Dengue is not spread from person to person; however, if a mosquito bites a recently infected person, the mosquito can acquire and spread the virus.

More than 100 million people contract dengue annually worldwide. Some experience symptoms, while others do not. Symptoms include high fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, joint, bone, and muscle pain, minor bleeding such as nose or gum bleeding, easy bruising and sometimes rash. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek care from a medical provider.

“Currently, the main focus is on controlling the mosquito population and dumping containers that collect water where mosquitoes can reproduce,” Eadie said. “In light of the recurring rains that we’ve been having in Key West lately, the health department and Mosquito Control are relying on everyone in the community to make a habit of emptying birdbaths, buckets, ashtrays, boats, tarps, gutters, tires and anything else on their property that collects water.”

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