

Texas town declared disaster area after child dies

A Texas town has been officially declared a disaster area after a 6-year-old boy died from a rare parasite. Residents in Lake Jackson, a city of 27,000 in the Greater Houston metro area, have been told not to use the tap water after officials realized it was contaminated with a horrifying brain-eating amoeba.

An alert was triggered when Josiah McIntyre died on September 8, days after playing in water at a city splash pad.

Health officials quickly confirmed he had died from Naegleria fowleri, an amoebic parasite.

While the amoeba is safe if swallowed, when it enters the body through

the nose it can reach the brain and cause a rapid, usually fatal form of encephalitis.

Symptoms include headaches, fever, nausea, vomiting and a stiff neck.

The majority of victims — 90-95% — die within a week.

Following McIntyre's death, 8 cities in the Houston area were warned not to use tap water.

Now 7 have been given the all-clear — but the parasite was found in 3 of 11 sites tested in Lake Jackson, including the McIntyre family's garden hose.

Now, the city is delivering bottled water to residents while it works on purifying the supply.

Being aware of West Nile in Texas

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts want Texans to be aware of a large rise in mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile virus in Dallas and Tarrant counties.

The state's warm climate makes Texas a prime breeding ground for vector-borne illnesses, and recent weather conditions have only heightened the mosquito problem for many areas of the state.

"In Texas, our biggest mosquito-related concern is West Nile virus," said Sonja Swiger, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension veterinary entomologist in Stephenville. "It has been found throughout Texas and the U.S., and even places that don't normally have a problem like Miami have had cases in 2020. It's just that kind of a year."

The West Nile virus also produces symptoms in people that can be similar to some COVID-19 symptoms — fever, cough and sore throat. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should consult their doctor.

"If you think you might have contracted West Nile virus, get tested," Swiger said. "Do not assume it is COVID-19."

WEST NILE MOSQUITO NUMBERS RISE

"We're seeing numbers as high in some counties as we experienced in 2012 and that could be problematic," explained Swiger.

"Tarrant County is currently the hotspot, so to speak, but Dallas County is also starting to see a rise in their number of infected mosquitoes and their vector index," she said.

"Tarrant County is reporting 30% positive in some areas and 50% positive in the northeast section, which includes the cities of North Arlington, Grapevine, Watauga, Keller and North Richland Hills, to name a few."

According to Dallas County Health and Human Services, for the week ending Aug. 1, 40 mosquito traps tested positive for West Nile Virus. A

total of 127 mosquito traps in Dallas County have tested positive to date for the year and there has been one human case reported.

The previous week, Tarrant County reported that 51 trapped groups, or pools, of mosquitoes tested positive for West Nile virus and that there have been 163 positive test pools for 2020 so far.

In 2012, Texas experienced its largest outbreak of West Nile virus in history with over 1,800 confirmed cases.

"Most of these victims reported they were bitten at home," Swiger said. "So, it's important that Texans be aware at all times and use repellents when necessary."

WHEN TO WORRY

AgriLife Extension has identified 85 different species of mosquitoes in Texas, however people don't need to worry about contracting West Nile disease from all of them — only Culex quinquefasciatus.

Swiger said without any heavy rains, the Culex quinquefasciatus population will continue to grow without chemical intervention.

"We cannot predict what the next few months will bring unfortunately, but if heavy rains are in the future, we would anticipate a decline in positives, as the mosquitoes would be washed away," she said.

The mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are night biters, Swiger said. People should be extra cautious when outdoors in the evenings and make sure screens have no holes and doors are kept closed at night and are properly sealed to prevent mosquitoes from entering the home.

STAYING SAFE

"Repellents are a must and the only real way to stay safe," said Swiger. "Use DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus, which may also be listed as paramenthane-3, 8-diol,

on people over 3 years of age, to get adequate protection. These are the only ones tested with certainty to stop the disease-carrying mosquitoes."

When you are outdoors in any area where there could be mosquitoes, it is wise to wear long sleeves and long pants. The tighter the weave of the fabric, the better protection it will offer from bites.

HURRICANES AND MOSQUITOES

West Nile virus-carrying mosquitoes can be just about anywhere, although we typically see them more around urban areas, said Swiger.

"The recent hurricane to hit south Texas and the lower Rio Grande Valley area has left many areas flooded," she said. "The rains will kick start development for the many thousands of floodwater mosquito eggs that have been laying dormant in the soil since last year or the last rain event."

She said when there are large areas of flooding, more locations will be inundated with mosquitoes at the same time.

"When there is just normal rainfall, only isolated areas will spark mosquito development, so hurricanes and tropical storms impact more areas at once and increase populations," Swiger said. "In addition to the inland floodwater mosquitoes, the salt marsh mosquitoes have been triggered to emerge, and so have any container species that were waiting for water, be that rain or irrigation, to arrive."

The Rio Grande Valley is not typically a location where we see a lot of West Nile virus, said Swiger, but they are dealing with large populations of mosquitoes right now due to Hurricane Hanna.

It's not just contracting West Nile from mosquitoes that Texans should be aware of, they are also carriers of viruses such as Zika, malaria and dengue.

DISTRICT COURT

Cases Filed

In the matter of the marriage of Suzanne I. Dodd and Kelly Dewayne Dodd, petition for divorce

In the matter of the marriage of Shyla Kiiskila and Evan Kiiskila and in the interest of children, petition for divorce

In the interest of Charles E. Wallace and Susan Wallace, petition for divorce

City of Vernon vs. Sulma Gonzales, delinquent tax suit

The State of Texas vs. \$12,081 United States Currency, notice of seizure

In the interest of a child/children, 1 case

Greater Vernon Area Chamber of Commerce

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August Renewals:

- AAA Portables
- Brantley & Wright Insurance
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- Wilbarger County United Fund
- KAUZ
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- Rocking A RV Park
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- Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites
- Miller Auctions
- Pepperberries
- Bevos Drive In
- Herring Bank
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August New Members

- Vernon Surplus
- Irl Holt

Upcoming events:

- a. Paper Pig Shredding Event/Coat Drive Oct 3rd Sponsored by H&R Block at United Supermarket
- H&R Block, Paper Pig Shredding, Vernon Chamber of Commerce, and United Supermarket are teaming up to provide coats for kids.
- Free Shredding with your donation of coats 9am - 1pm
- b. Red River BBQ Battle Oct. 16 & 17
- Wilbarger Event Center Registration for competition is open until day of event, if registered by Oct 9 you will be eligible for drawing of a \$200 gift card from United Supermarket.
- Sign up available at Vernon Chamber of Commerce office 1614 Main or Eventbrite.com



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