

The Southampton Press

www.pressnewsgroup.com www.27east.com

September 5-6, 2012

West Nile Arrives On Long Island

BY JULIA GÜNTHER

Mosquito bites are annoying. They are painful and leave big, red, itchy bumps on the skin. But even worse are the severely dangerous diseases mosquitoes may carry.

Recently, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services reported that mosquitoes have brought the West Nile Virus to Long Island.

Barbara Frerichs, the franchise owner of Sag Harbor-based Mosquito Squad, said during a telephone interview last month that the findings were very alarming. But according to her, there are West Nile cases on the East End almost every year, and people have to protect themselves and their families.

"It is important to be proactive rather than reactive," she said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the West Nile Virus can cause serious, life-altering disease. Although 80 percent of those who are infected will not show any symptoms, one in 150 people bitten will develop West Nile Fever.

"Since 1999, more than 30,000 people in the United States have been reported as getting sick with West Nile virus, and of those, almost 13,000 have been seriously ill, and over 1,200 have died," according to the CDC's West Nile



Brian Kelly sprays to prevent new generations of mosquitoes, and the West Nile virus, from entering a yard. COURTESY BRIAN KELLY

Virus website.

The course of the disease depends very much on an individual's immune system, which is why children and the elderly especially are affected, said Brian Kelly, president of the Southampton-based East End Tick and Mosquito Control, during a recent telephone interview.

This year's weather conditions have been particularly hospitable for mosquitoes, Mr. Kelly explained. The combination of a warm winter, a wet spring and hot summer has caused a rise in their number and their activity.

In August, tick nymphs reach their peak activity and present the greatest risk of passing on infection. Due to their very small size, they are difficult to detect, he warned. Therefore, East Enders need to take preventative measures to avoid being bitten.

To prevent new generations of mosquitoes from entering the yard, Mr. Kelly suggested elimi-

nating standing water sources, as mosquitoes need water to breed. Anything that holds non-moving water is a potential breeding ground for mosquitoes, he said.

Keep gutters clean and unclogged so that water can drain properly, he said. Additionally, people should avoid any kind of puddles in their yard. He also suggested drilling holes in the bottom, not the sides, of garbage containers stored outdoors.

As for the larger water sources at home, Mr. Kelly said that swimming pools must always be clean and chlorinated, even when not in use. And ornamental ponds should be aerated to keep water moving. He also recommended stocking ponds with mosquito-eating fish.

In addition to limiting the breeding habitat and water sources, Mr. Kelly also advised ways to limit the adult mosquito habitat. Adult mosquitoes rest during the day, usually on tall weeds or other vegetation, he said. To make the yard less hospitable, mow the lawn regularly and keep weeds away from the house.

Lastly, mosquito repellent is an option for those who plan on participating in outdoor activities. And for those who do not want to spray but still look for ways to protect themselves, Ms. Frerichs suggested mosquito repelling fans or bracelets to keep the insects at bay.