



PUBLIC INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 5.

DATE OF MEETING: April 19, 2010

REQUESTED BY: Pender County Health Department, Jack Griffith, PhD

SHORT TITLE: Recognition of Public Works Mosquito Control Program

BACKGROUND: Mosquito borne illness is a potentially serious problem in the southeastern counties in North Carolina. Mosquito borne illness, such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Encephalitis have at one time or another over the past several years created significant health problems throughout NC, including Pender County. I believe that it is very important that the county take a proactive approach to reducing or even eliminating the threat of these diseases by actively promoting a lifestyle approach that limits possible contact with mosquitoes, e.g., protective clothing; use of insect repellent; keeping the area near homes free of mosquito breeding sites; and actively promoting an effective spraying and larvaciding program. We have, for many years in Pender County, participated in a state supported program to use common chickens as sentinels for the identification of mosquito borne viruses in our county. Simply, we maintain two flocks of chickens, one on the west side and one on the east side of the county. During mosquito season, the chickens are bled regularly and the blood sent to the state laboratory to be tested for various arthropod borne viruses, such as EEE, and WN.

I monitor this program regularly because I believe that it has great value in protecting public health. I believe the Public Works Department is doing an excellent job maintaining our sentinel flocks and reporting blood samples to the state for analyses. For example, Public Works employee James Turner draws the blood from the chickens, packages and prepares it in a kit avoiding contamination, and submits it to the state along with a report. Public Works then receives a report for all of the counties in the Eastern Region. If there is a positive result in a surrounding county, Public Works increases the mosquito spraying in the areas closest to that county. This is the 4th year in a row that James Turner has received the Chicken Award from the state where the criteria is: accurate samples submitted, reports are accurate and all is submitted in a timely manner by the deadline. Mr. Turner has never submitted late or inaccurate samples.

Further, the Public Works Department has been involved in promoting good lifestyle practices in preventing mosquito borne illness. For example, The Pender County Public Works Department/Mosquito Control Division provided five educational programs this past year called "Skeeter Defeater Camp." These programs were held at South Topsail Elementary, Burgaw Elementary, Maple Hill School, Hampstead Library and Burgaw Library. They held their first puppet show this year. Pat Simmons, Administrative Officer wrote a Puppet Show Script that was performed by Public Works staff.

James Turner and Ronnie Huggins, Mosquito Control Technicians, held a hands-on educational program including yard observations and ways they can prevent mosquito breeding.

Tony Clewis held a mosquito identification class. Clewis explained to each child what process the Mosquito Control department does in identifying and analyzing mosquitoes in the area. The children were able to view a mosquito through a microscope. At the end of the camp the children were allowed to have a question/answer session. The purpose of the Skeeter Defeater Camp was to educate the children and adults of ways they can be "Skeeter Defeaters" by checking around their homes for potential breeding sites. Material was provided for the children to take home along with a Skeeter sticker and a Frisbee designed with our Skeeter Defeater logo.

They are hoping to expand their presentations this year to some of the schools, civic clubs, scout groups and have children do essay's on how they could become a "Skeeter Defeater."

I believe that the Public Works staff and its leadership should be recognized for doing an outstanding job in promoting and protecting the public health of the citizens and visitors of Pender County. I would hope that the BOCC of Pender County recognizes the excellent work of this department.