



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

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**PUBLIC ASKED TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THREAT OF
MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS IN LIGHT OF RARE MOSQUITO
FIND AT HONOLULU AIRPORT**

HONOLULU -- After rainy weather, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) reminds the public to remove standing water from their property to reduce the threat of mosquito-borne illnesses. Stopping the spread of diseases like dengue fever is even more important now that a disease-carrying mosquito species has been identified on O'ahu for the first time in more than 60 years.

On March 5, 2012, the DOH Vector Control Program identified the presence of the mosquito species *Aedes aegypti* at the Honolulu International Airport. *Aedes aegypti* has not been found on O'ahu since 1949. This mosquito is of public health concern because of its ability to rapidly spread dengue and yellow fevers.

"Keeping down the mosquito population can prevent the spread of serious illnesses," said Gary Gill, Deputy Director of Environmental Health. "This risk is made worse by rainy weather and now, the reappearance of the *aegypti* mosquito on O'ahu. Let's do what we can to protect our families friends and neighbors."

The DOH has received one reported case of dengue fever so far this year. In 2011, a total of six imported cases of dengue fever were investigated by the department.

Dengue fever is a constant threat in many tropic regions of the planet. Travelers may

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be bitten by an infected mosquito while overseas and bring the disease to Hawai'i when they arrive in the islands.

The DOH urges residents and property owners to:

- Clear standing water from areas where mosquitoes may breed.
- Take a few minutes every week to inspect your yard and home and eliminate anything that holds water and can breed mosquitos.
- Throw away old junk that collects water like old buckets, tires and flowerpots.
- Clear rain gutters and turn over empty containers.
- Treat anything you can't dump out with soapy water to kill mosquito wigglers.

"Just a few minutes work every week can help reduce pesky mosquitoes that may carry diseases." Gill said. "Dengue fever could flare up anywhere in the state where Aedes mosquitoes are living."

The aegypti mosquito is known to be present in a few isolated areas on the Big Island. The DOH hopes to determine the country of origin of the insects trapped at Honolulu International Airport. The mosquitos were collected the week of January 9-17, 2012 from an ovitrap designed to capture eggs laid by adult females. Of the twenty or so eggs reared from one trap, eight mosquitoes (4 female and 4 male) were positively identified as Aedes aegypti. The eggs were reared into adults to obtain a positive species identification.

Due to cut backs in the Department Vector Control program, the traps at the Honolulu International Airport are the only routine mosquito surveillance performed on O'ahu. Follow-up surveillance was initiated immediately to determine if the aegypti species has established itself; however, no further aegypti mosquitos have been found.

In most parts of Hawai'i, the Aedes albopictus mosquito is abundant. The albopictus mosquito is similar to the aegypti and can carry dengue fever, but is not as effective as the aegypti in spreading and sustaining the disease.

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Health care providers should report to the DOH all dengue-like illness in patients, especially those who have recently travelled to or from domestic or international dengue-affected areas, and submit specimens for laboratory testing.

For more information on reducing mosquitoes in and around your home and business, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/mosquitoes/>

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