



DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

Milestone reached in Hawai'i Island dengue fever outbreak

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2016

HONOLULU – With no reports of recent incidences of locally acquired dengue fever in 30 days, the state and County of Hawai'i announced a significant milestone in the Hawai'i Island outbreak that began in October. While the outbreak seems to have come to a halt, Gov. David Ige, along with other state and local officials caution the public not to let their guard down in the fight against mosquitoes and the diseases they transmit.

The state and Hawai'i County are standing down certain emergency response activities related to the dengue fever outbreak after 30 days of no new locally acquired cases. This decision rests on the fact that three periods of the maximum human incubation period of ten days have passed. The final day of the infectious period for the last reported case was March 27. However, as per routine operations, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) continues to immediately investigate all travel related cases and conduct mosquito assessments and/or treatment of potential areas of mosquito exposure.

“This milestone could not have been reached without the diligent efforts and teamwork by the Department of Health and the Hawai'i County Civil Defense Agency,” said Gov. Ige. “While this outbreak seems to be ending, our statewide response to mosquito-borne diseases must continue. We must remain vigilant in our mosquito prevention and abatement practices, be ready to respond to the Zika virus, and continue working together as a state to ‘Fight the Bite.’”

Since Oct. 28, 2015, DOH and the Hawai'i County Civil Defense Agency (HCCDA) have been actively investigating and responding to locally-acquired cases of dengue fever on Hawai'i Island. Dengue is not endemic to Hawai'i, but it is intermittently imported from endemic areas by infected travelers. As of April 27, 2016, 264 cases of locally-acquired dengue fever have been confirmed on Hawai'i Island with illnesses occurring as early as Sept. 11, 2015.

“By no means are we in the clear,” said Darryl Oliveira, administrator of the Hawai'i County Civil Defense Agency. “Cooperation and collaboration between the state and county have been exemplary but we continue to identify actions and efforts that we can improve on in the future. We appreciate the tremendous initiative shown by the community in assisting with mosquito abatement and encourage everyone to continue taking proactive measures around their homes and neighborhoods to keep our state safe.”

Over the course of the outbreak, DOH's Vector Control team surveyed a total of 523 private properties and 310 public spaces. Of that count, 220 private properties and 65 public spaces were sprayed and/or treated for mosquitoes. A total of more than 1,900 reported potential cases were evaluated and/or tested by DOH disease investigators and State Laboratories Division staff.

Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler added, “The fight against mosquitoes is far from over and we must do everything in our power to protect ourselves and our communities from the risk of

mosquito borne diseases. We continue to receive and investigate reports of travel-related suspect cases of dengue fever, Zika virus and chikungunya on all islands. As Zika continues to spread rapidly overseas, we must take precautionary measures to prevent any locally acquired cases from taking hold in our state.”

“Knowing the dengue fever outbreak has been halted is welcome news for Hawai‘i’s tourism industry, especially for the travel partners, employees and residents who rely on its continued success,” said George D. Szigeti, president and CEO of the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority.

“Travelers considering a visit to the Hawaiian Islands in the coming months can make their plans with confidence and without the hesitation that dengue may have been causing them.”

On April 11, Gov. Ige signed a supplemental proclamation to extend the state’s emergency period for mosquito borne illnesses. Under the extended emergency proclamation, DOH and the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA), with input from county partners, will continue ongoing efforts to develop a comprehensive response plan detailing appropriate actions and measures dependent on the state’s current risk associated with mosquito borne diseases. A statewide public awareness and education campaign will kick off this year to ensure people understand the risks of mosquito-borne diseases and how to best prevent these illnesses in Hawai‘i.

Pregnant women need to take special precautions against the Zika virus and should avoid travel to areas where Zika is actively circulating. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed that Zika can cause microcephaly in newborns, a birth defect where a baby’s head is smaller than expected when compared with other babies of the same sex and age. CDC has also confirmed that Zika can be spread from an infected man to his sexual partners. It is still unknown how long the virus can be spread in this way after the infected male’s symptoms have cleared.

For additional information about Zika virus and precautions, visit DOH’s Disease Outbreak Control Division’s website at http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/zika_virus/. For travel information and advisories, visit CDC’s website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>.

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