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GMCA Newsletter

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Washington Day, 2020

Engaged From A Distance

DUE TO COVID-19 THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR MAY 12-13TH IN ALEXANDRIA, VA WAS CANCELLED. INSTEAD, AMCA IS ORGANIZING A GRASSROOTS EFFORT TO REACH LEGISLATORS IN OTHER WAYS.

The emergence and rapid spread of Covid-19 and other communicable diseases demonstrate that threats to public health are escalating. We have seen how a lack of preparedness for the Coronavirus pandemic has compromised our efforts to control it to date. Alarmingly, we are now heading into mosquito and tick vector season, whose disease transmission put those afflicted at higher risk of fatal outcomes from COVID-19 infection. To ensure these challenges can be effectively met, public health and vector-control professionals must be equipped with the resources and capacity necessary for the prevention, treatment, and control of vector-borne diseases.

The threat from mosquito-borne and other vector-borne diseases continues, and our nation's limited existing capacity to respond to such threats demands action. Please join us in urging action by Congress to fund and support the implementation of the SMASH and TICK Acts, recent public health preparedness measures enacted by Congress.

To assist with the grassroots movement, go to <https://www.mosquito.org/page/22ndWashConf>.

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Annual Meeting

Athens, GA; Oct 14-16

The GMCA Board was supposed to hold our second meeting in March to start considering speakers for the upcoming annual meeting in October. Then along came COVID-19, and we aren't even sure there will be an annual meeting this October. However, planning must still be done, so we are having what has become the norm, a virtual meeting to discuss our upcoming (we hope) annual meeting.

In the meantime, we still need speakers. At this point, we need speakers who are willing to talk about mosquitoes, mosquito research, mosquito control, or just about any topic related to mosquitoes. We also usually have one or two non-mosquito talks, so if your favorite bug is a cockroach (ewwww), we would be happy for you to talk to us about that as well. I have attached the 2020 speaker sheet. If you'd like to come give a talk, please fill this out and send it back to me. You can choose what day, what time, and how long, and we will do our best to accommodate you. Our shortest talks are ~15 minutes, but we are happy to listen to you for an hour if you have something interesting to say. We especially like to have a good mix of operational vs research talks and talks from commercial vs municipal applicators, so please consider coming to give a talk if you are an applicator or a student doing research. We are an easy group to talk to, so no worries.

We do have some limited funding for covering 1 night at the hotel and waiving registration for speakers, as well as some limited funding for paying for someone to attend who couldn't otherwise. For that funding, please send me a short letter/email stating why you'd like to attend our meeting and why you can't without some funding.

Please consider giving a talk at the GMCA meeting this year. We all love to hear new stories from the lab and field.

Mosquitoes & Mosquito Control in the Time of COVID-19

Mosquito season in the central and northern parts of Georgia typically begins in late April or early May, while the south Georgia mosquito season can be nearly year-round, depending on the weather.

Due to the current pandemic, a frequently asked question is if mosquitoes can transmit the COVID-19 virus. The WHO and the CDC have both answered this question, stating that there is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 or any of the other known coronaviruses can be spread by mosquitoes or ticks. However, mosquitoes in Georgia can transmit WNV, EEE, and LAC. DPH recommends that while you are home, take the opportunity to check your yard and empty standing water sources to avoid making a place for mosquitoes to develop. Remember, mosquitoes do not practice social distancing, so avoid mosquito bites and the viruses they can transmit by eliminating standing water in neglected buckets, flowerpots, trash cans, and other containers around your home and in your neighborhood.

Mosquito control is deemed an essential service, so if you have a mosquito control program in your county or town, they will likely be out working to reduce mosquito populations to keep Georgians safe from mosquito-borne diseases. Mosquito surveillance specialists will also be out setting mosquito traps at this time, so if you have a nuisance mosquito problem, please report it. Mosquito surveillance helps determine what control measures will be most effective at reducing nuisance biting and what, if any, risk there is for disease transmission. Currently, mosquito surveillance is being done in every county in Georgia.

Mitigation Measures to Reduce Exposure Risks among Surveillance Personnel and the General Public

Vector Surveillance Coordinators and Environmental Health Specialists that perform surveillance and complaint follow up should adhere to the following CDC Guidelines concerning protective equipment and social distancing:

1. Handle all consumer requests by phone or email.
2. Avoid contact with stakeholders by asking them to stay indoors when performing surveillance activities.
3. Use door hangers to convey mosquito bite prevention strategies, do not knock on doors.
4. Wear masks when setting traps and picking them up.
5. Practice safe hygiene by not touching your face, and wash hands before eating.
6. Maintain social distancing, at least 6 feet apart, if setting traps in close proximity to a public venue (i.e. parks, recreation areas, restaurants)
7. When asked questions in the field, recommend they call or email their local County, District, or State Environmental Health Office.

Mosquito traps provide no possible source of any virus, especially if they are not handled by anyone but the person doing mosquito surveillance. If you have questions, rather than engage the person setting the traps in conversation, please visit the links listed below.

Resources

<https://dph.georgia.gov/environmental-health>

<http://www.gamosquito.org/index.htm>

<https://dph.georgia.gov/EnvironmentalHealth>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/>

http://www.gamosquito.org/resources/GA_Mosquito_Control_Programs2017.pdf

<https://www.mosquito.org/news/495060/Mosquito-Control-Continues-to-Protect-Public-Health-During-Coronavirus-Outbreak.htm>

ENTOMOLOGIST SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight on Dr. Tiffany Thuy-Vi Nguyen, GA Public Health Entomologist



Teaching a Mosquito ID Class

Dr. Nguyen (pronounced Winn) has been a champion for Georgia mosquito surveillance and control since the beginning of her career, receiving her Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology at the University of Georgia and then her PhD in entomology after working as an epidemiologist at the district level for the Northeast Health District. During her time at university, she worked with mosquito viral testing as well as working to determine best trapping methods for mosquitoes, producing information that is directly useful to mosquito control and surveillance efforts in the field. Dr. Nguyen has served as one of GMCA's board members for two years. She now serves alongside Dr. Rosmarie Kelly at the State office for the Georgia Public Health Department.

Dr. Nguyen's passion for increasing mosquito surveillance and resistance testing in Georgia has led her to build, along with Dr. Kelly, an impressive network of mosquito surveillance across the state of Georgia, allowing, for the first time in Georgia's history, consistent surveillance in all health districts and the beginning of a state-wide mosquito resistance testing program. Dr. Nguyen has also worked with many local municipal mosquito control efforts to ensure best practices are being used, and continues to do so, along with assisting in Georgia mosquito

identification and control workshops through the department of public health. With limited active ingredient pesticides available for mosquito control, the proper use of pesticides and monitoring of resistance to those pesticides is crucial for mosquito control professionals to be effective when treating for mosquitoes and responding to emergencies, and Dr. Nguyen has worked hard to ensure these efforts continue. Dr. Nguyen not only collaborates with universities, local health departments, and private pest control companies in Georgia, but also travels to speak at national, regional, and state meetings to gather information, build collaborations, and speak about the research we are accomplishing here in Georgia. She also traveled to Washington D.C. on multiple occasions to speak with legislators about the needs of mosquito control in Georgia and nationwide.

Stepping outside of mosquitoes but remaining involved in vector control, she also forged a collaboration between the department of health and the Georgia department of agriculture to ensure a state-wide tick surveillance program was forged, resulting in ticks from all over the state being sent in and identified. This is the first state-wide collaborative program of its kind and will provide basic surveillance data needed in Georgia.

We are lucky to have Dr. Nguyen as a GMCA board member, and to have her as a resource and champion of mosquito control in Georgia. Moving forward, she plans to continue to work with GMCA and the Public Health Department, continuing to fight for state-wide mosquito surveillance and control programs in Georgia.

(contributed by Annie Thompson, RCMC)

**Public Education: Beyond Personal Protection
By Kristin Reichardt, Special Projects Manager,
Richmond County Mosquito Control**

Wear insect repellent and light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors; dump out standing water on your property; and stay inside at dawn and dusk when vector mosquito species are most active. Mosquito control professionals know these are great guidelines to follow to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses, which is why we repeat them to the public so often, but we should acknowledge how this well-intentioned advice might sound: *I shouldn't wear what I want? I shouldn't keep my property the way I want? I shouldn't even go outside when I want to go outside?!*

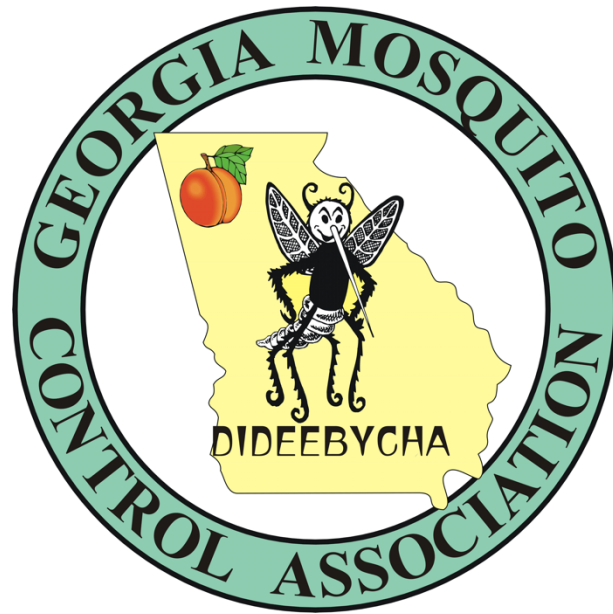
Thankfully, most people hate mosquitoes and their bites more than enough to listen to us, but all this advice we as “mosquito people” give about what the public should do may beg the question, what do we do? That’s why, in a time when personal freedoms and the responsibilities of academic and government institutions are under increased scrutiny, it is especially important for mosquito control professionals to clearly and honestly communicate what it is we do to help shoulder the responsibility for preventing mosquito-borne illnesses in our society.

At Richmond County Mosquito Control, for example, we integrate transparent information about the services we provide into our overall education program alongside the perennial personal protection guidelines. Residents of Richmond County call 311 to submit mosquito service requests, then we send technicians to inspect their properties. Sometimes, technicians inspect properties and find no standing water, no larvae, and few to no adult mosquitoes. Consequently, we cannot mitigate a source, larvicide, or adulticide, which frustrates some customers. We address this by explaining our

systematic inspection process and by emphasizing the value of our surveillance efforts, all to convey that we take their problems seriously and are still doing all we can to help.

Another, more universal example is adulticide usage. The public is increasingly distrustful of pesticides, and a lack of transparency from publicly accountable entities can exacerbate that distrust. Conversely, even in areas where adulticide usage is more accepted, their purpose can still be misunderstood: ultra-low volume (ULV), truck-mounted adulticide treatments, for instance, do not continuously prevent mosquitoes for days after application, which is a misconception we are also addressing through our public education efforts in Richmond County.

In public health, addressing lapses in transparency and misconceptions about the services we offer is a vital part of public education. It is not good enough to simply ask for sacrifices, whether they be as big as staying home for months to prevent COVID-19 or as small as dumping out bird baths to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses. The public deserves to know and see that we mosquito people are more than just “asks”, and that their sacrifices, big and small, are part of a larger, coordinated strategy that they can reasonably believe will accomplish its stated purpose – to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses and improve their lives.



The Georgia Mosquito Control Association

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