



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2016

16-020

HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES RESIDENTS & TRAVELERS TO REDUCE RISKS OF MOSQUITO BITES DURING MERRIE MONARCH FESTIVAL

HONOLULU – With the annual Merrie Monarch Festival just around the corner, the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is encouraging both residents and travelers to take extra precautions to stay away from and avoid being bitten by mosquitoes while they are in Hilo for the event. Although the number of locally-acquired dengue fever cases have slowed over the past several weeks, the outbreak is not over, and the public should reduce their risk of infection as much as possible.

In the days leading up to one of Hawaii's most celebrated traditions, Vector Control teams will be taking preventive measures by surveying and treating areas near the venues where the Merrie Monarch Festival will be held: the Afook Chinen Civic Auditorium and the Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium.

"People from all over the world come to Hawaii to celebrate the tradition of hula during the Merrie Monarch Festival, so we are doing our due diligence and taking proactive measures now to reduce the risks of both imported and local cases of mosquito-borne illnesses," said Keith Kawaoka, deputy director of Environmental Health. "We continue to work with our county partners to coordinate and implement best practices for mosquito abatement and prevention."

DOH is advising visitors to be vigilant in their efforts to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes during their stay. Recommended precautions include:

- Apply insect repellent when outdoors, and always follow directions for using repellants – especially on small children.

- Wear covered clothing, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and socks, to help protect skin from mosquito bites.
- Be aware and avoid activities in areas with lots of mosquitoes.

In addition to these recommendations, DOH advises Hilo residents to take the following steps in their own neighborhoods to help fight the bite:

- Eliminate standing water in buckets, containers and puddles around your home;
- Fix leaky faucets and outdoor hoses that may be dripping water;
- Treat bromeliads and other plants that hold water with a larvicide;
- Clear storm gutters and other outdoor drains of leaves and lawn cuttings;
- Repair screens and jalousie windows to keep mosquitoes out; and
- Dispose of old tires and anything else that may collect and hold standing water.

For further recommendations on how to take precautions against mosquitoes and dengue fever, visit DOH's Disease Outbreak Control Division's website at

<http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dengue-outbreak-2015/>.

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