



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UF/IFAS Extension Gives Tips For Zika Virus Prevention

~ Know the Facts ~

GAINESVILLE, FL- With public concern about the Zika virus, the UF/IFAS Extension is giving tips on how to avoid contracting the virus. Although the Zika virus is circulating in Central and South America and the Caribbean, currently, there is no evidence that local populations of Florida mosquitoes are infected. However, Jorge Rey, Professor and Interim Director of the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory (FMEL), in Vero Beach, Florida advises that it is important to be prepared and vigilant in case local transmission occurs.

Roxanne Connelly, Extension Medical Entomology Specialist with FMEL, and part of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences has provided the following tips:

1. People need to do all they can to manage the mosquitoes most likely to be involved in Zika virus transmission in Florida should the virus show up in local mosquitoes. These mosquitoes are among those known as “container mosquitoes” specifically, the yellow fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, and the Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*.
2. Initial measures include getting rid of containers in the yard or outside your business, because they collect water and become perfect habitats for immature stages of these mosquito species. These include tires, wheel barrows, potted plants that sit on saucers, cans, bottles and more. You should inspect your yard weekly to make sure you don't have any containers. Bromeliad plants and bird baths also can house container mosquitoes. For these types of mosquito habitats, they can be flushed with clean water weekly, or can be treated with mosquito-specific *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bti) granules such as Mosquito Dunks® or Mosquito Bits®.
3. Inspect windows and doors for holes and tears and repair them to exclude mosquitoes.
4. Mosquito repellents should be used when people plan to be outdoors during times when

mosquitoes are biting. The longest lasting repellents contain DEET and picaridin. Whatever type of repellent you use, read the label to make sure you're putting on a product registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Connelly recently hosted a webinar for County Extension faculty across Florida to learn all the latest information about Zika. Public concerns about Zika triggered UF/IFAS scientists to write a new Extension document to explain the virus and mosquito transmission. The paper can be found at <http://bit.ly/1QTLdQO>. FMEL scientists have also crafted a new Zika FAQ document for their website, which can be located at <http://bit.ly/1O0eLbi>.

"There are no vaccines yet that protect against Zika. Vaccines approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are not likely to be available for several years, according to the Extension paper. That's why protection against mosquito bites is so vital," says Connelly.

Jorge Rey, Professor and Interim Director of the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory co-authored the new paper for the UF/IFAS Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS) in which UF/IFAS faculty members outline the origins of the Zika virus, how it is transmitted, and what we can do to prevent it. Six other FMEL faculty members helped write the Zika paper. The scientists at the FMEL are also applying for research funding to work on the Zika virus.

"FMEL scientists do not yet know how effectively local Florida populations of mosquitoes will be able to transmit the Zika virus to humans," Rey says. "But they've spent many years studying the mosquito species and how they deliver other viruses, namely chikungunya and dengue."

Meanwhile, state mosquito control agencies and the Florida Department of Health monitor local areas for diseases and for these mosquito species. Additionally, the FMEL regularly conducts research on testing and monitoring techniques to try to improve the relevant technologies.

This release was prepared by Brad Buck and Roxanne Connelly, UF/IFAS Communications. For more information about Zika and how to protect yourself, please contact the UF/IFAS Pasco County Cooperative Extension Service Office at <http://www.pascocountyfl.net/Index.aspx?NID=381>, or by phone at 352.518.0156. The Pasco County Cooperative Extension Service assists Pasco County residents by delivering practical, educational programs in environmental horticulture, sustainable agriculture, 4-H and youth development, and family and consumer sciences.

