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WEST NILE AND TRAVEL: DISEASE TAKES A HOLIDAY
What consumers should know before they hit the road this Labor Day

WASHINGTON, *August 24, 2004* – Labor Day signals an end to many things –sweltering weather, swimming and shorts, just to name a few. But September also marks the *beginning* of something – the height of West Nile virus season. With one of the biggest travel weekends of the year coming up (and the unofficial end of summer), some may be unaware of the health threats awaiting them on their last summer fling. A recent study conducted by RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)[®] shows 58% of Americans do not take precautions against West Nile virus while traveling.

“It is just as important to take precautions against contracting West Nile virus while traveling as it is at home,” cites Allen James, president of RISE, an association of manufacturers and suppliers of pest control products used in and around homes, businesses and public areas that promotes the safe and responsible use of these products.

James’ comment comes in light of the fact that many people have contracted the virus while away from home. In 2003, all reported cases of West Nile in California came from residents who contracted the disease while traveling outside the state. Most recently, a Uruguayan woman has become infected after a trip to the United States.

In states where virus activity has been low, citizens may have let their guard down about protecting themselves. But, they need to remember that conditions at their travel destination can be much different, even into the fall months. The virus can still be a threat as late as November, in areas where the weather stays warm.

Most communities across the United States have adopted an Integrated Mosquito Management (IMM) approach to controlling the diseases spread by this insect. This approach, which is endorsed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, incorporates surveillance and monitoring, sanitation, maintenance, biological and chemical control, and education of the public in prevention measures.

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“We are very fortunate in this country to have the resources to fight the threats that insects pose to our health,” said James. “The balanced approach that IMM takes, which includes the use of pesticides when necessary, has helped us contain outbreaks and minimize the danger posed by mosquitoes and other insects in this country.”

Outside the U.S., however, efforts to control mosquitoes vary greatly. Before embarking on trips abroad, travelers should educate themselves on the risks they may encounter when visiting other regions of the world and take precautions to protect themselves from insect-borne illnesses.

The threats for specific mosquito-borne diseases vary from region to region and include West Nile virus, malaria, yellow fever, dengue fever, and the most recently identified threat, Rift Valley fever, to name a few. These diseases are serious and may be deadly. Death rates from these diseases are substantial in some countries.

To ensure that these threats do not ruin an otherwise enjoyable vacation, RISE recommends travelers take the following precautions:

10 Tips for Protecting Yourself from Mosquito-Borne Diseases When Traveling

1. Learn about health threats that are prevalent in the region where you will be traveling. Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control’s travel site for precautions for various destinations, both domestic and abroad (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>).
2. See your doctor at least eight weeks before traveling abroad to obtain vaccinations and medications to help protect you from insect-borne diseases.
3. Choose accommodations that have well-screened or completely enclosed, air-conditioned areas.
4. Purchase protective items, such as a DEET-based repellent, before you leave the United States in case they are not available at your destination.
5. When not staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net treated with mosquito-control products. If you are unable to find a pre-treated one, spray an untreated net with this type of product.
6. Wear light-colored clothing with full-length pant legs and sleeves.
7. Use insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin.
8. Purchase and wear special insect-repellent clothing.
9. Protect infants by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.
10. Pay special attention to mosquito protection between dusk and dawn.

For more information, visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online at www.cdc.gov or RISE at www.westnilevirusfacts.org

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RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)[®] is a national, not-for-profit trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of specialty pesticides and fertilizers. The association serves as a resource to the industry, media, government and other organizations seeking information on these products and their use. RISE monitors legislative and regulatory issues in Washington, D.C., and around the country, providing law makers with accurate information on key issues that affect the industry.

RISE works with, and is a resource for, the Environmental Protection Agency. RISE and the EPA have worked together on projects such as the Consumer Labeling Initiative, a campaign encouraging people to read and follow household product labels.

Established in 1991, RISE is located in Washington, D.C., and serves nearly 200 member companies. To learn more, visit the RISE Web site at www.PestFacts.org.

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