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Spraying stops disease-carrying mosquitoes when West Nile virus peaks

WASHINGTON, August 18, 2005 -- According to RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)[®], August and September are peak months for West Nile virus and may prompt public health officials to implement local spray programs deterring the spread of the mosquito-borne disease when high numbers of human cases are recorded.

“Individuals need not be reluctant to have their neighborhoods sprayed for mosquito control because proven products are available with minimal risks,” said Allen James, president of RISE, an association that promotes the safe and responsible use of pest control products.

To combat mosquito populations infected with the virus, state and local governments make applications of control products called adulticides to protect citizens from a possible outbreak. After passing extensive health and safety tests, adulticides are registered by the Environmental Protection Agency and pose minimal risks to human health and the environment when used according to label directions.

Citizens may have concerns about neighborhood spraying. There are recommendations for additional safety:

- Stay inside and keep doors and windows closed during applications. Generally, only two-thirds of an ounce per acre (less than 4 teaspoons) of product added to water is applied as a spray mist that stays in the air up to 90 minutes after release.
- Turn off air conditioning or ventilation systems.
- Bring in pets, toys and patio furniture. Items left outdoors can be wiped off with soap and water after applications.
- Fruits, vegetables and herbs from gardens should be washed but will be safe to eat.
- Swimming pools do not need to be covered and will be safe for swimming after the applications.

Mosquito control applications are highly effective in preventing the spread of West Nile virus, as evidenced in the city of Fort Collins, Colo. The city implemented an emergency spray program in 2003 to combat an outbreak of the virus. Before the applications began, 211 people in Fort Collins and its immediate vicinity had contracted West Nile virus. After the applications, only 17 cases were reported in the area through the

remainder of the season. According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the drop in cases in that city was far more dramatic than the gradual decrease in infection rates in the rest of the state.

“The risks associated with proper use of pesticides are so low one cannot document any lasting effects,” said James. “Neither human deaths, serious illness nor disability are associated with spraying for mosquitoes. However, the same cannot be said for the victims of West Nile virus.”

For more information on West Nile virus, visit www.westnilevirusfacts.org.

About RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)

RISE is a national, not-for-profit trade association representing 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. Go to www.pestfacts.org.