TREEHOLES AND MOSQUITOES

La Crosse (California) encephalitis is a severe illness that mainly affects children. It is caused by the La Crosse virus. Humans can only get the virus through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most cases occur in late summer, July -October. After an incubation period of 5 - 15 days, symptoms usually start with fever, headache and vomiting. Some patients have seizures. Most patients are hospitalized for 7 - 10 days. There is no vaccine. This disease can be prevented through control of the vector (carrier) mosquito.

One kind of mosquito, the "tree hole mosquito" (<u>Ochlerotatus triseriatus</u>), is the main vector in Summit County. The tree hole mosquito breeds only in containers of water. It does not use pools of water on the ground. These can be natural containers such as cavities and crevices in trees (tree holes).

Artificial containers such as old tires, cans, buckets, toys, or other containers left in the shade <u>can breed hundreds of mosquitoes each week.</u> Discarded containers, especially <u>tires</u>, should be removed or dried out and covered to prevent this encephalitis vector from breeding.

Tree holes are a difficult problem. The best time of the year to find tree holes is when all the leaves are off the trees. Not all cavities in trees hold water. Holes that are just damp after a heavy rain may have rotted through. These will not produce mosquitoes. The mosquitoes require standing water to develop.

It is probably best to have the tree holes filled by a professional arborist. Improper filling may result in permanent damage to the tree. If you choose to fill the tree hole yourself, use the following steps:

1. Remove all water, leaves, and other debris from the hole first. Be careful not<u> to use a sharp tool</u> for this, as it may damage the living tissue in the tree and promote decay.

    Do <u>not</u> drill a hole to drain water. After all debris is removed, sponge dry the hole.

2. Fill the cavity with a urethane foam or comparable material. Foam is available at most hardware stores as caulking material in pressurized cans.

3. Trim and paint the foam after it has hardened using a heavy coat of latex paint.

For further information contact the Summit County Public Health Mosquito Control Program at (330) 923-8856