

ZIKA VIRUS FACT SHEET

What is the Zika Virus?

Zika virus is a mosquito-transmitted infection related to dengue, yellow fever and West Nile virus. It is primarily transmitted to people through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. Over the years a number of small outbreaks of this virus have occurred in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, but the effects on human health were minimal. A little over nine months ago, the virus was found in South America for the first time when Brazil confirmed several "locally acquired" cases. In the following months, locally acquired infections have been confirmed in a number of South and Central American countries.

Currently, no cases of mosquito-borne Zika Virus transmission have occurred in the continental United States. However, as of March 16, 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported 283 locally acquired case of the Zika Virus in Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. Inspectors in those locations may be at risk.

What can FSIS employees do to minimize the risk of exposure while working at an establishment?

The best way to protect against infection is to follow CDC guidelines. Some of the guidelines that apply to inspection personnel are:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.
 - Always follow the product label instructions.
 - Reapply insect repellent as directed.
 - Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.
 - If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

Reimbursement for Insect Repellent

Inspectors who do ante mortem inspections in regions that have active transmission via mosquitos (including foreign travel) will be reimbursed for insect repellent. Reimbursement procedures can be found in [Directive 3410.3 Reimbursement Provisions for Inspection Expenditures](#). Employees will only be reimbursed for a quantity of repellent that is appropriate for personal use.

Consumer Reports recently evaluated insect repellents and found that products that contain at least 20% Picaridin or 25% DEET to be the most effective.

What are the health effects of the Zika Virus?

According to the CDC, the most common symptoms of Zika virus are fever, rash, joint pain, or conjunctivitis (red eyes). Most people will only experience mild symptoms, lasting for a few days to a week and the virus is very rarely fatal. Once a person has been infected, he or she is likely to be protected from future infections. However there is still cause for concern. Although not confirmed, there is strong and growing evidence that infection with Zika virus has resulted in a higher likelihood of Guillain-Barré syndrome and the birth defect called Microcephaly.

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Date: 05-26-2016

Version 1.0

Guillain-Barré syndrome is a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system.

Microcephaly is a birth defect causing newborns to have unusually small heads and incomplete brain development. Although there is no expert consensus, there is growing evidence suggesting that infection with the Zika virus during pregnancy may cause microcephaly. The CDC has urged pregnant women not to travel to about two dozen countries, mostly in the Caribbean and Latin America, where the outbreak is growing.

How is the Zika Virus transmitted?

The most common way to become infected with the Zika virus is through a bite from a mosquito capable of transmitting the disease.

There is also strong evidence that the Zika virus can be transmitted sexually. Updated guidelines for safe sexual activity after visiting a region with confirmed cases of the Zika virus can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/hc-providers/qa-sexual-transmission.html>.

Is there a vaccine available?

There currently is no vaccine available.

What other procedures should be followed by FSIS employees?

As always, inspectors should follow the sanitation procedures and employee hygiene as specified in 9 CFR 416.4 and 416.5. Therefore, when inspectors reenter a facility they must thoroughly wash their hands so that the insect repellent does not become a contaminant.

See your health care provider if you develop symptoms of Zika virus and work in or travel to areas where Zika virus is found.

Where can FSIS employees turn for information on the Zika Virus?

Centers for Disease Control Zika Virus Page - <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

Consumer Reports "Best Mosquito Repellents" - <http://www.consumerreports.org/insect-repellents/mosquito-repellents-that-best-protect-against-zika>

National Institute Health Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) page - http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/gbs/detail_gbs.htm#3139_1

Directive 3410.3 Reimbursement Provisions for Inspection Expenditures
<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=ESHGDirectives5257>

How should training for this Health Hazard Information Sheet be recorded?

Per requirements found in FSIS Directive 4791.1 Section IX, all occupational health and safety training is to be recorded using either AgLearn or FSIS form 3530-12. Training records are to include the topics covered, date, and employee name. The Agency is to retain all training records for a minimum of five years."

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