

The 2018 NFMAD season was a challenging time for mosquito control, given drought conditions throughout the valley, combined with high temperatures and wildfire smoke. The river was lower earlier than in the previous 40 years, and many of the irrigation ditches ran out of water months before usual time, forcing the high use of domestic water sources, and alternate irrigation methods.

These conditions, combined with infrequent but heavy rainstorms, eliminated many mosquito sources while simultaneously creating others. The North Fork District spans 50 square miles, with a small and insufficient budget for mosquito control, but the program of aggressive physical mitigation of breeding areas over the last 6 seasons has increased the effectivity of the operations program. Added to these issues, more than one third of Delta county has zero mosquito control, particularly the southern and western borders of Hotchkiss, causing adult mosquito pressure around a highly populated area that includes the Delta County Fairgrounds.

Despite these challenges, our crews aggressively treated areas known to hatch mosquitoes throughout the 50 square miles of the District and endeavored to locate and map all new transitional sources. Public reporting helped immeasurably in locating areas previously unknown or newly created. When numbers of adult mosquitoes were identified, those areas were rapidly target fogged, followed by extensive trapping, site evaluation for breeding areas, and larval treatment. As always, public venues were both given priority and barrier treated to keep mosquitoes away during events and gatherings.

West Nile virus (WNV) is endemic in Culex mosquito populations, and this season the virus was extremely virulent. As in prior seasons our unique possession of a RAMP reader allowed us to rapidly identify, target and treat areas of WNV infection, within as little as 4 hours after test results. If initial measures, including extensive trapping, site evaluation, and target fogging, were not immediately successful in eradicating positive WNV readings on the RAMP, the next level of crew response was employed. Any area of continuing positive trap pools was extensively monitored and treated, every 2-3 days. As always, the public was notified to take extra personal precautions to avoid the illness. WNV virulence rises and falls in cycles, and it appears that this was a difficult year for disease control throughout Colorado, and the western United States. Unfortunately, there were several serious cases of WNV infection reported this season in the North Fork Valley. In the past 5 years there have been incidences of high WNV infection in the mosquito population, but no reported incidences of human occurrence, however that is no comfort to those who have contracted the virus or have loved ones who have become ill.

NFMAD will continue to aggressively work to control the mosquito population and strive to increase our effectivity, while respecting both the health of residents and the environment.

It is a thin and sharp line to tread as neither mosquitoes nor WNV will be eradicated with current technology. In this agricultural community mosquitoes and water go hand in hand.

Currently, the 2018 six month season for the NFMAD field and laboratory crews has come to an end. The arrival of lower day and nighttime temperatures has all but halted the hatching of juvenile mosquitoes. Our indicator traps thorough out the District no longer catch any mosquitoes, therefore the RAMP reader that enables us to rapidly assess the level of WNV infection in the Culex mosquito population cannot be of use. The public is experiencing few if any mosquitoes, and the Culex mosquitoes nearing dormancy are now less motivated to seek blood in their preparation for hibernation. If you have experienced mosquitoes in your home or outbuildings, please consider calling 970-527-6681 for a non-toxic barrier spray application.

NFMAD is proud to have the support and confidence of the community that we have earned in the last 5 years.

We also wish for the renewed health and speedy recovery of those who have been infected with WNV. Our hearts go out to all the victims of this illness.