



behavior research center's

Rocky Mountain Poll

NEWS RELEASE
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MOST AWARE OF WEST NILE VIRUS THREAT YET UNINFORMED OF MOSQUITO CONTROL METHODS

Phoenix, Arizona, August 21, 2002. Public health officials may be interested to learn that most of the public here is aware that the mosquito-borne West Nile virus may soon find its way to Arizona. At the same time, however, nearly four in ten have no idea what they can do to help curb the spread of mosquitos.

This lack of public awareness of what individuals and families can do to prevent mosquito spread may trace to several factors, not the least of which is that most Valley residents (79%) say they have no problems with mosquitos in their neighborhoods and thus perceive they have no reason to worry about what they might do to help. Further, among those who have been here long enough to compare the mosquito problem of today to that of five years ago, consensus is that the mosquito problem is not getting more serious. A second factor may be that until recently, mosquito control public information campaigns have not received a lot of play in this region.

If the virus does find its way to the Valley, it will afford public health officials an opportunity to strengthen public understanding of what they can do at the household level to help prevent the breeding of mosquitos. With awareness of the problem already at pretty high levels, receptivity to such a public information campaign will be high as well.

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The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 600 adult heads of household throughout Maricopa County conducted between August 8th and August 15th, 2002, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit www.brcpolls.com to read this and other recent polls.

Those with some understanding of what can be done to reduce the opportunities for mosquitos to breed point mostly to getting rid of standing water, but it is interesting that only a few mention specific things that might go unnoticed in a climate where standing water is uncommon. For example, very few mention such things as making sure rain gutters drain properly, or emptying or changing bird baths, wading pools and potted plant trays. Most appear unaware that there are breeds of fish which thrive on the larvae of mosquitos and can be put in ponds . Quite a few include strategies to keep from getting bitten by a mosquito (i.e., not going outside at night, using mosquito repellent, changing security lights from white to yellow bulbs and so on), when asked what homeowners can do to stop mosquitos from spreading. The study also registered about five percent who believe that getting rid of standing water means that they should consider draining their swimming pools.

Across the Valley, the proportion reporting mosquitos as a problem is highest in Tempe where 37 percent consider mosquitos a problem, including five percent who classify them as a "serious" problem.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll Arizona (2002-III-09) is based on 600 telephone interviews conducted from August 8th through August 15th, 2002, with adult heads of household throughout Maricopa County. In a sample of this size, one may say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.1 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

ENCLOSED: Statistical data

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STATISTICAL DATABehavior Research Center
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"In general, are mosquitos a major, a minor or not a problem in the area you live in?"

	MAJOR	MINOR	NOT A PROBLEM
Valley wide	2%	19%	79%
Phoenix	2	15	83
Scottsdale/Paradise Valley	4	18	78
Westside	1	21	78
Tempe	5	32	63
Mesa/Gilbert/Chandler	1	18	81

"Would you say that you have more mosquitos, fewer or about the same as always in your area of the County than there were five years ago?"

	MORE	FEWER	NO CHANGE	NOT LIVING IN THIS AREA FOR 5 YEARS
Valley wide	8%	12%	54%	26%
Phoenix	9	12	50	29
Scottsdale/Paradise Valley	12	7	66	15
Westside	7	14	55	24
Tempe	10	20	49	21
Mesa/Gilbert/Chandler	5	11	56	28

"There are some things that consumers do in and around their homes to prevent the spread of mosquitos. As far as you know, what can be done?"

	TOTAL *
Eliminate standing water where mosquitos breed	50%
Use insecticides/repellants	21
Other solutions	16
Not sure	38

* Total exceeds 100 percent due to multiple responses

STATISTICAL DATA

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“There is a new mosquito-spread virus, affecting people and animals in over 30 states. It is called the West Nile Virus, which public health officials think may soon come to Arizona. Would you say you have heard a lot, some, only a little or nothing at all about the West Nile Virus?”

A lot	44%
Some	27
Only a little	18
Nothing at all	11

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