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Statewide News Release

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Public Health Showcases Fight the Bite Zika Prevention at State Fair

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 18, 2016) – Health and Family Services Cabinet Sec. Vickie Yates Brown Glisson, Department of Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles, and representatives from the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) and University of Kentucky gathered at the Kentucky State Fair today for a Zika awareness and prevention event. Participants discussed the state’s response to Zika in Kentucky and emphasized avoiding travel to Zika-affected areas and measures to prevent mosquito bites and control local mosquito population.

Guests were led through information stations where subject matter experts provided information on various topics related to Zika prevention such as public mosquito control efforts; addressing standing water issues and removing mosquito breeding grounds around the home; and personal protective measures like insect repellent and appropriate clothing. “Marty Mosquito,” public health’s mascot for Zika prevention and awareness, handed out educational materials.

“Kentucky has been diligent in tracking cases of Zika virus in residents that have traveled to Zika-affected areas,” said Sec. Glisson, who provided an overview of what the state has been doing to prepare for a possible Zika outbreak in Kentucky. “We will continue to work together with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) to respond to mosquito control issues if the virus enters our state’s mosquito population as well as emphasize the importance of localized and individual prevention.”

Increasing scientific evidence suggests a link between infection in pregnant women and infants born with birth defects such as microcephaly. Microcephaly is a condition where the head is smaller than normal and is very likely to be associated with significant central nervous system abnormalities and life-long complications.

“We strongly warn everyone – especially pregnant women or women planning to become pregnant – to avoid traveling to Zika-affected areas where the virus is circulating,” said Ardis Hoven, infectious disease specialist for DPH. “We must remain vigilant and take steps to protect ourselves. This includes being knowledgeable about where the virus is spreading, consulting with a healthcare provider, and following public health recommendations to avoid mosquito bites.”

“Mosquito control is the key to preventing in-state transmission of the Zika virus in Kentucky,” Commissioner Quarles said. “The Kentucky Department of Agriculture stands ready to help local governments with mosquito



control efforts. At the same time, every Kentuckian can help by eliminating areas of standing water that tend to serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.”

DPH and KDA have worked diligently on mosquito control efforts in communities where residents have been diagnosed with Zika. Following confirmation of any Zika positive person in Kentucky, DPH investigates the environment surrounding the patient’s home and, if mosquito breeding areas are identified or a high mosquito burden is found, a request is made to KDA for mosquito control. If mosquito control is warranted, KDA sprays in the general area where the case person lives in order to reduce the mosquito population, keeping mosquitos in the area from becoming infected.

Additionally, DPH works to educate the patient about methods to keep from being bitten by mosquitos and to prevent sexual transmission of the virus to others. These measures, along with the mosquito abatement program implemented by KDA, are designed to reduce risk to the population and prevent spread of Zika virus.

Based on reports of possible Zika transmission through sexual contact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends pregnant women avoid sexual contact with men who have recently returned from areas with Zika transmission. CDC recommends men who have traveled to a Zika-affected area and developed symptoms consistent with Zika during travel or two weeks after travel to use condoms for six months after symptoms begin or to abstain from sex for six months. CDC recommends men who have traveled to a Zika-affected area and did not develop any symptoms to use condoms for at least eight weeks after departure from Zika-affected areas or abstain from sex for eight weeks.

To date, 20 confirmed cases of Zika virus have been reported in Kentuckians who contracted the illness while traveling to Zika-affected areas.

For a full list of affected countries and regions visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html>.

Kentuckians planning international travel are particularly encouraged to consult the CDC’s Travelers’ Health Website, <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>, for country-specific health information for travelers. A weblink about Zika Travel Information, <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information>, is found on that site. International travelers to at-risk countries who develop fever, rash, joint pain, red inflamed eyes and other acute symptoms within two weeks of return to Kentucky should consult with their medical provider.

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent infection and no specific antiviral treatment for Zika infection. Its most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes, although many infected individuals have no symptoms at all.

State officials remind residents to follow the three D’s for mosquito bite prevention: Dress – Wear light colored long sleeve shirts and long pants; Drain – Eliminate all standing water where mosquitoes breed such as bird baths, tires, buckets and gutters; and Defend – Use an EPA-approved insect repellent at all times for outdoor activities.

For further information visit the DPH website <http://healthalerts.ky.gov/zika> or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/zika. Zika virus awareness and prevention Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are available at <http://healthalerts.ky.gov/Pages/Zika.aspx>

Be sure to follow KYHealthAlerts on Twitter and DPH’s Zika mascot, Marty Mosquito, on Instagram, @marty mosquito.

the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.