As part of their weekly testing around Lubbock, Texas Tech's Vectorbone Zoonoses Lab found two mosquito populations testing positive for West Nile Virus in west Lubbock between July 14-16 and in southeast Lubbock between July 21-23.

While Dr. Steve Presley, Professor at Texas Tech's Environmental Toxicology, says he can't reveal the exact location where the West Nile positive mosquitoes came from, he assured EverythingLubbock.com that infected mosquitoes will be all around Lubbock soon.

"Lubbock's not that big, if it's going on in one area, it's probably going on in other parts of the city," said Dr. Presley, who has spent decades of his life researching mosquitoes and diseases.

His testing information is relayed directly to the City of Lubbock's Health Department and to state and regional health officials. The cases reported from July are the only reported cases in Lubbock mosquitoes for 2015. Presley said that as the South Plains comes out of a drought, bird populations and rodent populations are increasing, which have boosted mosquito numbers.

When Presley's team collects mosquitoes each week, they separate out the "culex tarsalis" mosquitoes. Those mosquitoes can carry West Nile Virus, so their genetic material is tested in large groups each week to look for strains of West Nile.

"What concerns me is the hot,dry weather with showers from time to time, because that will create little puddles for culex tarsalis to breed in," Presley said.

The City of Lubbock's Health Department wants to make one note to this new development.

"We have not had any human cases reported of West Nile," said Katherine Wells, director of Public Health for the City of Lubbock.

Lubbock's Health Department will be responsible for investigating any human cases of West Nile when they occur. Wells said it's likely that Lubbock will see human cases of West Nile this year, because humans have contracted the virus in Lubbock for the last few years. The presence of virus in mosquitoes here isn't necessarily cause for alarm, Wells said.

"70 to 80 percent of those who are infected with West Nile have absolutely no signs or symptoms or very few signs or symptoms. It's only one percent of those infected who have a severe disease," Wells explained.

Typically, people who contract West Nile experience flu like symptoms. Those who contract the neuro-invasive strain of the virus can develop neurological illness, headache, high fever, neck stiffness, coma, or tremors, the Lubbock Health Department said.

Dr. Presley explained that now that the virus has been detected in mosquitoes, it's likely that human cases will start appearing in the coming weeks.

"I anticipate we'll see an increase--hopefully not a real severe increase but an increase--in mosquitoes and probably in a few weeks we'll see a human case or two," Presley said.

Presley said that mosquitoes have tested positive for West Nile in Lubbock every year since 2002. He doesn't think the South Plains will be able to get rid of the virus.

"Especially once West Nile virus is established in an area, it's very difficult to get rid of it," Presley said.

Though the virus is tough to combat, Presley said it's not something to panic about, just a reminder to avoid mosquito bites and stay inside at dusk and dawn.

Presley adds that West Nile chances in the South Plains continue through October or November.

Vector Control is aware of the West Nile Virus cases as well, they are monitoring Lubbock's mosquitoes and plan to continue their operations as normal.

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