

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BVI Residents Experiencing Harsh Conditions Associated With Ongoing Drought

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Beverly Lewis **October 02, 2015**



TORTOLA -- The British Virgin Islands continue to experience drought conditions with a significant reduction in rainfall recorded throughout the territory.

As predicted by the Caribbean Regional Climate Centre, mixed conditions are being experienced in the eastern Caribbean while the rest of the Caribbean ranges from severely dry in some islands to extremely wet in others.

Drought conditions are severely affecting parts of Puerto Rico with 20 percent of the island experiencing extreme drought conditions causing water rationing by authorities.

The drought conditions in Puerto Rico are affecting residents, farmers, as well as tourism, while islands like Dominica are seeing some of the wettest months on record.

Rainfall statistics accumulated by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) for the period January to September reveal a total of only 7.25 inches of rainfall from the Paraquita Bay weather station and 10.26 inches from the Valley, Virgin Gorda station. Comparing the same period in 2014, rainfall totals were at 20.81 inches for Paraquita Bay and 19.99 inches for Valley, Virgin Gorda.

With school back in full session, Health Disaster Coordinator, Dr. Ronald Georges is reminding parents with young children and persons caring for the elderly to ensure that they are protected from the direct heat and that they are always hydrated.

He said the main concerns in the health sector at this time are dehydration, increase in respiratory conditions and heat stroke, especially among children and persons working outdoors.

Dr. Georges added, "Although not many cases have been reported it is important that persons practice preventative measures. School administrators should ensure that children, especially those playing outdoors are given water breaks to refresh themselves." Dr. Georges also warned that any sporadic periods of rainfall has the potential for quick increases in mosquito breeding possibly resulting in dengue and Chikungunya cases.

He said, "Residents are being urged to continue to practice good hygiene and to keep their surrounding free of standing water especially during the brief periods of rainfall that we have been experiencing during the past few weeks."

Another concern arising throughout the community and particularly among pet owners is the increase in ticks in dogs. Populations of the *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* (brown dog tick) increase dramatically with warmer weather and droughts.

Chief Veterinarian, Dr. Michael Montrose explained, "You will see sudden increases in tick numbers in or around households with dogs."

Our dogs are more outdoors oriented and pick up more ticks in the yard so the common anti-tick medications may not be adequately formulated for the tropics especially in the warmer months."

Dog owners are encouraged to bathe their dogs with anti-tick solutions adequate for the tropics.