

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Second Case Of Zika Confirmed In Virgin Islands; Number Expected To Increase

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ST. CROIX -- A new case of the Zika virus has been confirmed on this island, coming one month [after the first case](#) was reported. The news was revealed to The Consortium this afternoon by Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) officials, during a previously planned interview that took place this afternoon at the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital.

Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis, C.D.C. Medical Doctor Dan Baden and Deputy Commissioner of Health Kimberly Jones, made known pertinent Zika virus information, the steps D.O.H. has been taking to curtail its rise, and gave critical guidance to residents to help them protect themselves.

The latest case was confirmed to be a 42-year-old male. Dr. Ellis learned of the new case late Thursday, and the information was transmitted to D.O.H. on Friday morning, according to Ms. Jones.

"This means that we have mosquitoes here that are infected with the Zika virus and are transmitting it to others. One additional case doubles our case count so it is significant, and we do have quite a few labs pending, so we do anticipate that we will be getting more positives in the future," Dr. Ellis said.

The officials on multiple occasions stressed the importance of treating the virus with the level of seriousness that it demands. Ms. Jones said while one of D.O.H.'s key drives has been to make sure that pregnant women and those looking to become pregnant remain uninfected, all residents should be as equally guarded in their efforts against the disease. Ms. Jones said that the more people become infected, the greater the chances are for pregnant women to contract the vicious virus.

Indeed, aside from causing babies to be born with shrunken, misshapen heads -- a deformity known as microcephaly -- [researchers now say](#) that even infants who appear normal at birth may be at higher risk for mental illnesses later in life if their mothers were infected during pregnancy.

Dr. Baden said D.O.H. has been engaging the community on many levels to help raise awareness, including clinic outreach and town hall-style events.

"We're going to continue to do that type of outreach, and we're getting information out as much as we can. We're working with the laboratories to make sure they're able to collect the specimens and get them in for testing. So we will continue with this strategy, but probably increase it," Dr. Baden said.

And Dr. Baden revealed that federal officials have been pleased with the territory's efforts, and the C.D.C. has been using strategies put in place by the local D.O.H.

"The C.D.C. has been really impressed with what the Department of Health has been doing," Dr. Baden said. "Some of the materials that the department has already developed, we are sharing with other parts of the U.S. and also internationally, so they're doing a really good job."

Dr. Baden said the C.D.C. is also advising residents who think they may be experiencing symptoms of the disease, to use condoms when having sex. "And if someone has a pregnant partner, they may want to use protection as well," he added.

D.O.H. has partnered with several clinics and labs to provide Zika virus testing at no cost to patients. Pregnant women and people who develop symptoms of the virus (fever, rash, joint pain, red eyes) should see their primary care provider for evaluation. If their providers believe that Zika testing is warranted, these patients are urged to contact the following locations:

St. Croix

Beeston Hill Clinical Lab

773-4990

Clinical Laboratory Inc. (Sunny Isle)	778-5369
Frederiksted Health Care, Inc.	772-0260
Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center	778-6311
Primary Care PLLC	718-7788

St. John

Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center	693-8900
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St. Thomas

Community Medical Laboratory	776-7444
Cranston/Dottin Biomedical Lab	774-6256
Doctors Clinical Laboratory	774-2760
Havensight Medical Laboratory	774-5515
Roy Lester Schneider Hospital	776-8311

Facilities not listed above that would like to participate in the testing program and be reimbursed for their services, should contact D.O.H's emergency operations center at (340) 712 6205.

On Wednesday, Dr. Michelle Davis, along with D.O.H. Acting Commissioner Juan Figueroa-Serville, Dr. Ellis and Ms. Jones, met with Governor Kenneth Mapp, Department of Planning and Natural Resources Commissioner Dawn Henry and federal officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A), including Region II Director Judith Enck, to discuss vector control plans and Zika preparedness.

D.O.H. officials also attended a public town hall meeting on Wednesday night, hosted by St. Croix West Rotary Club in Frederiksted to update community members about the department's efforts to fight Zika.

Francine Lang, director of Public Health Preparedness, representing D.O.H., along with other government directors and commissioners, answered questions about Zika and the D.O.H.'s response. The health officials, including Dr. Brett Ellis, director of Public Health Laboratories, and Stevie Webster, chief environmental officer of D.O.H., were joined by C.D.C. officials to include Mr. Baden.

The department is also releasing weekly Zika status updates on its website, an example of which can be seen [here](#).

To date, S.O.H. has completed the following items in response to the Zika outbreak:

- The U.S.V.I. D.O.H. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was implemented on 2/10/16 in response to Zika. The EOC is coordinating all Zika response efforts and fielding all media requests/public inquiries. It is headquartered in the St. Croix District at the Charles Harwood Medical Center.
- A hotline was set up to field all Zika related questions/inquiries - (340) 712-6205 (direct) or 340-718-131 x6205 via the switchboard
- CDC deployed field staff to help assist the DOH (at no cost to the DOH) with the Zika Response.

Field staff include:

- Jay Roth: Epidemiologist
- Dan Baden: Medical Doctor
- Darcie Bentz: Public Health Advisor
- Jessica Schindelar: Communications Specialist
- Jordan Peart: Public Health Advisor

Additionally, eleven press releases have been sent out with information about Zika in the past 6 weeks, since the first confirmed case. Three live radio appearances and 4 television interviews related to Zika response, videotaped and broadcast on the Government Access Channel.

On Friday, February Dr. Baden and Dr. Esther Ellis did a Zika presentation at the University of the Virgin Islands (St. Croix campus) for the general population.

C.D.C. staff conducted community outreach at Agrifest 2016 in St. Croix, conveying Zika preventative measures and answering community members' questions about the D.O.H. and C.D.C. strategies. C.D.C. was present at the Agrifest all three days, and over 400+ copies of Zika related fact sheets were distributed. The D.O.H. has posted Zika related information/resources on its Facebook page.

The D.O.H. conducted a Knowledge, Attitudes, & Practices (KAPs) survey about Zika at Agrifest 2016. Results will be analyzed to make sure messaging and public knowledge are in line.

The following are actions items and plans to be completed in the short/long-term Zika response: