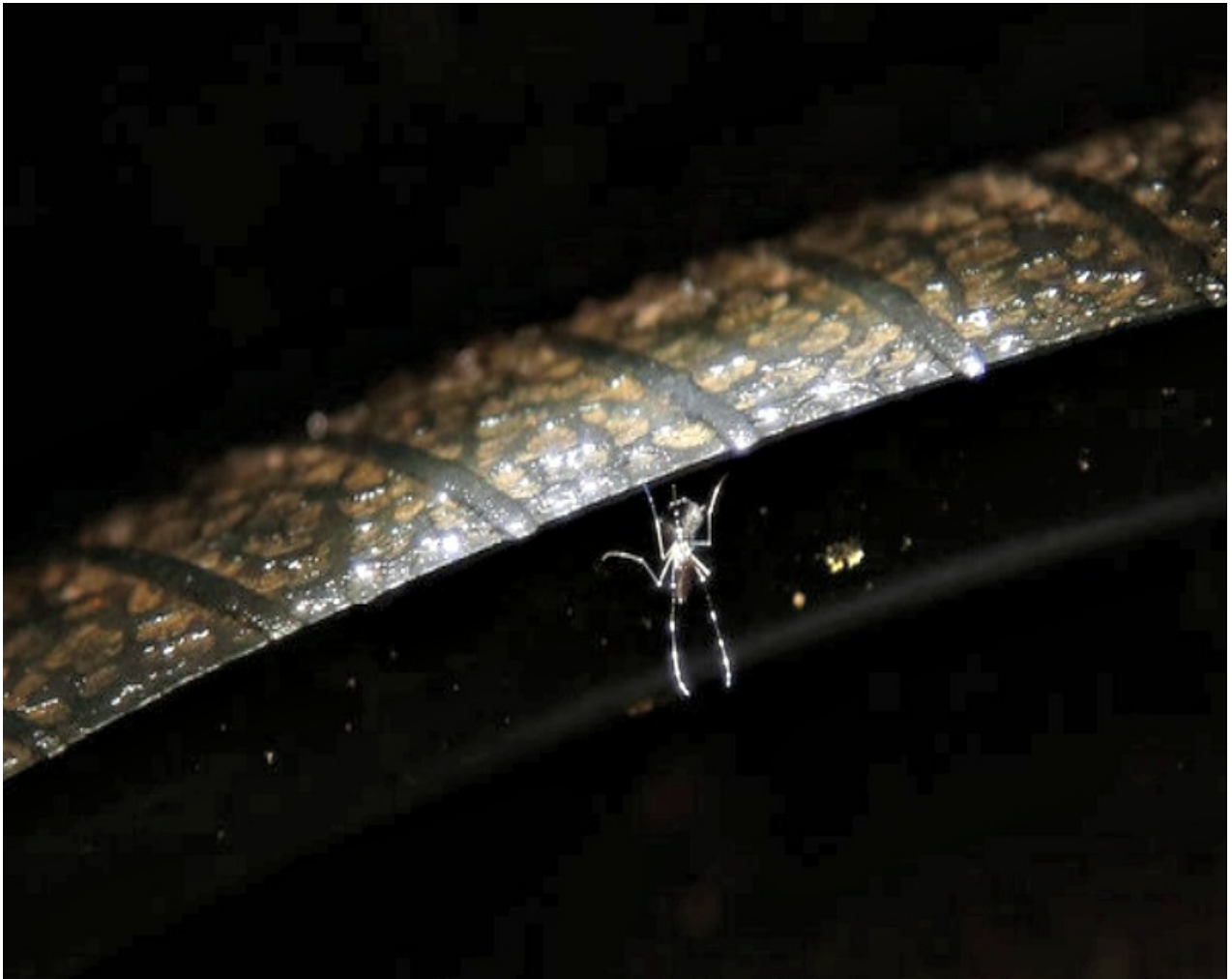


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two New Zika Cases Recorded In USVI, Bringing Count To 26

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ST. THOMAS -- There were two new cases of the Zika virus in the territory according to the Department of Health and the weekly Zika report, bringing the total count territory-wide to 26. Of the new cases, one was recorded here and the other in St. Croix.

Last week, the World Health Organization issued a [new set of guidelines](#) urging people living in areas where the Zika virus is circulating to delay pregnancy to avoid having children with [birth defects](#).

Currently, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are the only two parts of the U.S. to have known local transmission. In the U.S.V.I., a majority of the cases are local

transmissions, according to Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis, speaking to The Consortium by telephone last week.

Additionally, the new guidelines affect millions of couples in 46 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The advice is an acknowledgement by the W.H.O. that with no vaccine available and mosquito eradication efforts failing to slow transmission of the virus, delaying pregnancy may be the best way that women in affected areas can avoid having children with severe brain damage.

The guidelines were originally published last week but did not garner wider attention among experts until Thursday, following a W.H.O. clarification distinguishing between people who visit Zika-affected countries and those who live in them. It says men and women of reproductive age “should be correctly informed and oriented to consider delaying pregnancy.”

“It’s about time,” said Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine, speaking to The New York Times.

Dr. Hotez, whose medical school is in Houston, where the Zika virus is expected to arrive this summer, has urged women in all Zika-affected areas to consider delaying pregnancy this year. “What happens when Zika hits Texas and the Gulf Coast this summer?” he asked.

Governments of five different countries have already issued the advice, including Puerto Rico, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has steered clear of this approach, concluding that governments should not dictate what women do with their partners in their personal lives.