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# Region health officials pushing larvicide plan

Continued from pg. 1

In February, the region approved larviciding catch basins in Oakville and Burlington.

If the recommendation is passed at Wednesday's regional council meeting as many as 7,000 catch basins in north Halton could be larvicided for a total of 35,000 across the region.

The region anticipates getting approval for a larviciding permit from the Ministry of the Environment next week. The entire Halton program is scheduled to start the second week of May.

The region will hire nine university students to check for larvae and a private company will drop the pellets.

Combining the larviciding, surveillance and monitoring portions of the region's West Nile battle plan, costs of the entire program will likely exceed \$800,000.

The region also plans to larvicide stagnant pools of water on public property, like roadside ditches and small ponds, throughout Halton this summer.

It's a worthy initiative to help stem the spread of the potentially-deadly, mosquito-borne virus, said Dr. Bob Nosal, Halton's medical officer of health.

There were 59 human cases of West Nile in Halton last summer, three from Milton, but none yet in Halton Hills. Some got very sick, but none died. There were 17 deaths linked to the virus in Canada last year.

The Halton numbers were the highest in the province, next to Toronto, and south Oakville was the hot spot for West Nile in 2002, given it had the highest rate of infection in North America. A blood study to determine the prevalence of the virus in south Oakville and south Burlington residents has been undertaken and Nosal hopes to have the test results some time next month.

When it comes to West Nile, the most pressing issue the health department has heard from residents is the concern for standing pools of water, Nosal said.

He said a four-page leaflet would be mailed to Halton residents next week explaining the region's West Nile program, as well as tips on how to safeguard their property from mosquitoes by getting rid of the stagnant water.

Public information meetings will be held by the region in all four municipalities in late May to discuss West Nile. In Halton Hills the meeting is scheduled for May 20, 3-8 p.m. at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre, 9 Church St.

—By Jason Misner, special, with files by Cynthia Gamble, staff writer



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