ASIAN TIGER MOSQUITO

The Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, was detected at the ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach and in at least eight wholesale/secondary distributor plant nurseries in California. This exotic mosquito was apparently imported from China in shipments of *Dracaena* species, known in the United States as “Lucky Bamboo.” The plants are shipped via cargo ships in cargo containers that hold about 500 cases with 300 plants in each case. The plants are shipped in 2-3 inches of water, and it takes 15 days for the cargo to reach Los Angeles from China.

After the initial discovery of *Ae. albopictus* by the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District, investigations at wholesale nurseries documented additional infestations at 3 locations in Los Angeles: 1 in Santa Clara County, 2 in San Bernardino County, 2 in Orange County, and 1 in San Diego County.

Investigations of Coachella Valley nurseries resulted in findings of *Cx. quinquefasciatus* larvae in containers with the “Lucky Bamboo” in a Palm Desert nursery. The CO₂ trap did not collect any adult mosquitoes in the nursery. Follow-up surveillance of this and other nurseries in the Coachella Valley continues.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initiated an embargo on June 29, 2002, of shipments of *Dracaena spp.* in standing water, permitting shipments arriving before July 17 to be treated.

The Asian tiger mosquito is a container-inhabiting species that lays its eggs in any water-containing receptacle. The primary urban habitats for immature stages of this species are artificial containers such as tires, flowerpots, cemetery urns/vases, rain gutters and ornamental ponds. This mosquito prefers to lay its eggs above the water surface on dark, rounded, vertical surfaces. Field studies show a preference for black, red, or woody substrates. An important biological feature of this species is its photoperiodism. In temperate climates, *Ae. albopictus* over-winters in the egg stage. When females experience long days (> 13.5 hours), they produce non-over-wintering eggs. During periods with short days, they produce eggs that over-winter. Larvae are also found in natural containers such as tree holes, bamboo pots, and leaf axils. Adult mosquitoes are covered with shiny black scales with distinct silver white bands on the palpus and tarsi. Its most striking characteristic is the band of silver scales forming a distinct stripe on the dorsal surface of the thorax and head.

*Ae. albopictus* is a very aggressive biter and a known vector of dengue virus in Southeast Asia, Southern China, and Japan. To date, there is no evidence of human disease transmission by this mosquito in the United States, although eastern equine encephalitis, Cache Valley, Keystone, Tensaw, Potosi, Jamestown Canyon, and La Crosse viruses have been isolated from field collected mosquitoes. It feeds on a number of hosts, including man (indoors and outdoors), domestic and wild mammals, and birds. The flight range of adults is limited, and they have not been observed to fly in strong winds. Its major means of international dispersal is through the transport of used tires and water-holding containers.