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First Case of Zika Virus Is Confirmed in Putnam County

BREWSTER, NY—One Putnam County resident has been confirmed positive for Zika virus and a second additional case is being tested, announced the Putnam County Department of Health today. Both residents had recently travelled out of the country. The current case count in New York State is 16 confirmed infections.

“We are working with our local physicians and the New York State Department of Health to monitor and test residents with recent travel to a Zika-affected area,” said Michael J. Nesheiwat, M.D., Interim Commissioner of Health. “Symptoms of Zika infection are usually mild. Male travelers without symptoms do not require testing. However, all pregnant women—with or without symptoms—who have travelled to a Zika-affected region should be tested, because of a link to microcephaly or other birth defects.”

Zika virus, which is spread by infected mosquitos, has been appearing around the continental United States, mostly in travelers who have visited a Zika-affected area. One lone case in Texas is being investigated in a sexual partner of a traveler from one of the affected areas.

The situation regarding Zika virus has been changing as new information develops. The Centers for Disease Control have set up a dedicated website at cdc.gov/zika and the New York State Department of Health has established a Zika Information Line: 1-888-364-4723.

Testing is currently not available through commercial laboratories. Residents who have travelled to an area with Zika infection should contact their personal healthcare provider who will work with the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) to facilitate the proper testing procedure through the NYSDOH laboratory at Wadsworth Center. Wadsworth is one of only three state laboratories in the country equipped to perform the screening and confirmatory tests of Zika antibodies and other related viruses.

To date local transmission of Zika infection has been identified in 30 countries and territories, including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Caribbean. Further spread in the region may occur. Prior to 2015, outbreaks of the virus had occurred only in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Last May the first confirmed cases were reported in Brazil.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth, www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam, www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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