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TINY CREATURE BATTLES JERSEY MOSQUITOES

(11/P68) TRENTON - A new weapon is being unleashed this spring by the State in the ongoing battle against mosquitoes: *Macrocyclus albidus*.

The tiny, shrimp-like crustacean, which is native to New Jersey and has a hearty appetite for mosquito larvae, is being grown in large numbers in a state Department of Agriculture laboratory and has been distributed to mosquito control authorities in Atlantic, Bergen, Cumberland, Gloucester, Monmouth, and Warren counties.

"This is another environmentally friendly tool that can be used to battle mosquitoes, without having to resort to pesticides," said Bob Kent, administrator of the DEP's Office of Mosquito Control Coordination. "It is especially effective in small containers or pools of water, and is really good in dealing with the Asian tiger mosquito, which can breed in the tiniest of places _ even a bottle cap."

The DEP and State Department of Agriculture have been exploring this new mosquito-battling tool for several years, doing field trials in Hunterdon, Morris, Monmouth, Ocean and Cumberland counties since 2006. The crustacean, which is used to deal with mosquitoes in warmer locales from New Orleans to Vietnam, was approved by State scientists for a full-fledged New Jersey rollout this spring to deal with an expected bumper crop of mosquitoes.

Kent said the *Macrocyclus albidus*, which is a copepod, thrives in fresh water and is a valuable tool to battle mosquitoes in artificial containers, roadside ditches, small water pools, clogged downspouts and other, smaller wet areas that can breed plenty of mosquitoes. They attack mosquito larvae voraciously, said State entomologists.

They are being mass-produced at the State Department of Agriculture's 21,000 square-foot state-of-the-art Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Rearing Laboratory, which was constructed in 1985 and designed for biological pest control.

Macrocyclus albidus is on the front line of pesticide-free mosquito fighting this spring in the Garden State along with several small fish with an appetite for mosquito larvae employed by the DEP's bio-control program, including *Gambusia affinis*, or mosquitofish, and fathead minnows, freshwater killifish and bluegill sunfish, which have been stocked in many lakes and ponds statewide.

"These creatures all make excellent mosquito deterrents, and can be more effective than pesticides, which require multiple applications every mosquito season," said Claudia O'Malley, technical advisor in the DEP's Office of Mosquito Control Coordination. "In some places, these creatures can eliminate or

greatly reduce the need for any applications at all. That is good for the environment, but bad for mosquitoes.''

For more information on the State's mosquito programs, visit:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito/programs.htm>

For tips on reducing mosquito activities around your home this spring and summer, visit: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/mosquito/owners.htm>

For more information on the State Department of Agriculture's Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Rearing Laboratory, visit:

<http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/beneficialinsect.html>