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# EH staff busy during dog days of summer

Lawrence-Douglas County Health  
Department Communications

While most of us are enjoying the warm weather and spending time outdoors, the hottest season of the year is also the Environmental Health staff's busiest time.

The four-member EH staff conducted 125 inspections in May, a number that jumped to 237 last month, said Environmental Health Director Richard Ziesenis. Part of that increase is due in part, to the opening of outdoor pools, new construction and the new food service inspection program.

The beginning months of a program are always hectic, but June was especially busy as the department's two food inspectors conducted food service inspections at restaurants, schools, convenience stores, caterers and mobile vendors, which included 25 vendors in town for the Wakarusa Music and Camping Festival.

Complaints regarding trash, pools, food, sewage and dog bites – to name a few – are also up. Last year at this time, Environmental Health received 71 complaints. So far this year, the staff has fielded 118 complaints from the public.

An especially wet spring also has kept EH staff busy helping to decrease the mosquito population by placing larvicide or mosquito "dunkers" in areas such as north Lawrence, where inadequate drainage systems allow for areas of standing water. These areas can attract breeding mosquitoes, which may carry the West Nile Virus, Ziesenis said.

The potential for foodborne illness can also increase in the summer as more people host barbecues, attend weddings and other occasions where food might be left out longer than it should.

Members of the public occasionally ask the staff food handling questions, such as how long they can leave out their potato salad or other dishes, Ziesenis said. Leaving food out between two and four hours is the standard rule of thumb, however two hours without refrigeration is preferred.