Siouxland District Health Department has partnered with Iowa State University, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the State Hygienic Laboratory for many years to monitor mosquito populations and the presence of mosquito-borne diseases, or arboviruses.

Mosquitoes are collected multiple locations in two types of traps. New Jersey light traps are used to monitor mosquito populations, including which species are present, and their distribution and abundance. Light traps will attract a wide variety of mosquito species and help to indicate population trends. Gravid traps are used to monitor for viruses in the mosquitoes. Unlike the light traps, gravid traps do not kill the mosquitoes and the samples are frozen to preserve any virus that may be present so that it can be detected using molecular testing techniques. These traps also are more likely to attract mosquitoes that are the major vectors of mosquito-borne viruses in Iowa.

While Zika virus is frequently in the news, in Iowa it is still West Nile Virus that poses the greatest threat. West Nile Virus is typically spread by Culex mosquitoes that have become infected with the virus after biting an infected bird. They breed in stagnant water, which is why it is so important to eliminate standing water as much as possible. Information about West Nile Virus can be found on IDPH’s website at http://www.idph.iowa.gov/cade/disease-information/west-nile-virus.

Data from Iowa Mosquito Surveillance can be found on Iowa State University’s website at http://mosquito.ent.iastate.edu/index.php.