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Mosquito that carries Zika virus more prevalent in state, Published May 23. 2017 4:05PM | Updated May 23. 2017 4:23PM

The mosquito that carries the Zika virus has expanded its range and prevalence in the state, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station said Tuesday.

The Asian tiger mosquito is an invasive species from East Asia and appears to be expanding its range northward in the United States, the experiment station said. They are "aggressive human biters" that can spread several viruses, including chikungunya, dengue, along with Zika and West Nile.

The research finding is significant in tracking the threat posed by the mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, the experiment station said in a news release.

The Asian tiger mosquito was first detected in the state in 2006 in an "isolated finding," the experiment station said, but since then has been found at several locations and increasing in abundance, especially after mild winters.

Populations are most abundant in urban and suburban areas along the southwestern shore, but occasionally were found in the central part of the state. The mosquitoes were found to be carrying two different viruses, Cache Valley and West Nile, indicating the species is a threat to humans, the experiment station said.

In the southern United States, the Caribbean and Central and South America, the species carries Zika virus, which can cause birth defects.

"We would anticipate further expansion and build-up of this species with projected climate change," said Theodore Andreadis, co-author of the article and director of the experiment station. "Its aggressive biting behavior and ability to transmit a cadre of human disease causing viruses clearly warrant further study and close monitoring through our statewide surveillance program."