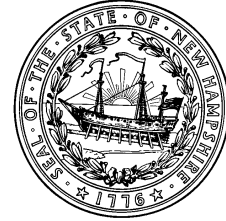


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Beginning of High Risk Period for EEE and WNV

Concord, NH - The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) wants to remind all residents that we are now entering the high-risk time period for seeing eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) activity. The mosquito testing season runs from June 1 to October 31, but positive results in mosquitoes, animals, or people generally occur between about July 20th and October 20th.

So far this year, no positives have been identified in New Hampshire, though 2,131 mosquito pools, 1 horse sample, and 56 human samples were tested. In 2007, no specimens tested positive for WNV, but there were 3 human cases, 6 mosquito pools, and 2 animals identified with EEE. West Nile virus was already detected this year in several New England states including Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts. One person from Connecticut has been diagnosed with the disease. EEE has not been detected yet this year in New England, though there has been substantial activity in the southern U.S.

“This is the time of year we would expect to start seeing positive test results,” said Dr. Jose Montero, Director of Public Health at DHHS. “We certainly hope that we do not, but we must be prepared. We are again asking that clinicians report any neurologically compatible illness so those cases can be tested and investigated as appropriate.”

Due to an increased risk of disease to people, the Department declared a public health threat for Rockingham, Eastern Hillsborough, Southern Merrimack, and Southern Strafford Counties in 2006. The Department has maintained that designation in order to provide additional assistance to communities in the Southeastern part of the State in combating EEE and WNV.

“Unfortunately, it is a part of the new normal in New England that we need to use repellent in the summer,” said DHHS Commissioner Nicholas Toumpas. “It should be routine for everyone. We do not want anyone else to become ill with either of these diseases.”

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Eastern equine encephalitis and West Nile virus are transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. EEE is a serious disease that carries a high mortality rate for those who contract the serious encephalitis form of the illness. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, and sore throat. There is not treatment for the disease, which can lead to seizures and coma. Symptoms usually occur 4 to 10 days after being bitten.

For individuals who are bitten by a mosquito carrying West Nile virus, the risk of contracting the infection is low and in the overwhelming majority of cases there are no symptoms or just mild, flu-like symptoms. At times, West Nile virus can causes meningitis and can be a serious threat to seniors, young children and those with compromised immune systems. If illness does occur, it typically happens within 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Besides the previously approved repellents, those containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus, a new type, IR3535, has been approved by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as safe and effective in reducing the risk of mosquito bites.

Fact sheets about these diseases, handling of dead birds, and more information about communities under declared public health threat can be found on the Department's website (www.dhhs.nh.gov). Questions about WNV, EEE, or bird surveillance can also be answered by calling the toll-free West Nile virus/EEE information line at 866-273-NILE (6453).

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Attachments: (1) Prevention Guidelines for WNV and EEE and (2) NH Risk Map

Prevention Guidelines for West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis

NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

1. Eliminate standing water and other mosquito breeding locations around your property. Please do not attempt to drain or alter natural waterbodies for mosquito control, since the management of ponds and wetlands is regulated by the Department of Environmental Services and any planned alterations will require a permit before work may begin. In warm weather, mosquitoes can breed in any puddle that lasts more than 4 days!

- Remove old tires from your property.
- Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or other containers. Don't overlook containers that have become overgrown by aquatic vegetation.
- Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers that are left outside.
- Make sure roof gutters are clean and draining properly.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools and hot tubs. If not in use, keep empty and covered and keep covers free of standing water.
- Aerate garden ponds or stock them with fish.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and change water in birdbaths at least twice weekly.
- Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use.
- Remind or help neighbors to eliminate breeding sites on their properties.

2. Be aware of where mosquitoes live and breed and keep them from entering your home.

- Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Weeds, tall grass, and bushes provide an outdoor home for adult mosquitoes, including several species commonly associated with West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis.
- Mosquitoes can enter homes through unscreened windows or doors or broken screens. Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace all screens in your home that have tears or holes.
- Resting mosquitoes can often be flushed from indoor resting sites by using sweeping motions under beds, behind bedside tables etc. and once in flight, exterminated prior to sleeping at night.

3. Protect yourself from mosquito bites.

- If outside during evening, nighttime, and dawn hours when mosquitoes are most active and likely to bite, children and adults should wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks.
- Consider the use of an effective insect repellent, such as one containing DEET. A repellent containing 30% or less DEET (N,N-diethyl-methyl-meta-toluamide) for children and adults. Use DEET according to the manufacturer's directions. Children should not apply DEET to themselves. Repellents that contain Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 have also been determined to be effective.
- Vitamin B, ultrasonic devices, incense, and bug zappers have not been shown to be effective in preventing mosquito bites.

For more information on West Nile Virus or Eastern Equine Encephalitis, call the NH Department of Health and Human Services toll-free West Nile Virus Information Line at 866-273-NILE (6543), or visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.