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STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE SECOND HUMAN CASE AND SECOND HORSE CASE OF EEE IN MASSACHUSETTS

Residents urged to take precautions against mosquito bites until first hard frost

BOSTON – Thursday, September 6, 2012 – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the second human case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in a Massachusetts resident. The man, a resident of the Metrowest area of Worcester County in his 70s, was admitted to the hospital in early August and died several days later. The diagnosis of EEE was not confirmed until an autopsy was completed, and EEE exposure is estimated to have taken place during the first week of August. This is the first confirmed death from EEE in a Massachusetts resident this year. Today’s announcement does not immediately impact EEE threat levels in Metrowest communities because the DPH case investigation is still ongoing.

“Our heartfelt condolences go out to this individual’s family and friends,” said DPH Commissioner John Auerbach. “His illness and death underscore the extremely serious nature of EEE and the need for continued vigilance and preventive measures against mosquito-borne diseases.”

Health officials have also confirmed the second case of EEE in a horse this year, in an animal which was stabled in Belchertown. Based on this finding, the EEE threat level has been raised to “Critical” in Belchertown and to “High” in Amherst, Palmer, Pelham, New Salem, and Ware. DPH urges communities designated as “Critical” to cancel evening outdoor events for the remainder of the summer.

“Mosquitoes remain present in our environment until the first hard frost, so people need to continue to take precautions to avoid getting bitten,” said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Al DeMaria. “Use insect repellent, cover up exposed skin, and avoid outdoor activities at dusk and nighttime, when mosquitoes are at their most active. “

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There have now been two confirmed human cases of EEE in a Massachusetts resident this year. There were two cases of EEE in August of last year acquired in Massachusetts; a fatal case in a Bristol County man and an infection in a tourist from out of state. EEE activity in both 2010 and 2011 raised public concern and prompted DPH to work with a panel of experts to evaluate and enhance the state's surveillance and response program. EEE is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is a serious disease in all ages and can even cause death.

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

Drain Standing Water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.

Install or Repair Screens. Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

Protect Your Animals

Animal owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools – especially after heavy rains. Water troughs provide excellent mosquito breeding habitats and should be flushed out at least once a week during the summer months to reduce mosquitoes near paddock areas. Horse

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owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. If an animal is diagnosed with WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to DAR, Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795 and to the Department of Public Health (DPH) by calling 617-983-6800.

More information, including all WNV and EEE positive results from 2012, can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800. The findings of the DPH Eastern Equine Encephalitis Expert Panel can be found [here](#).

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