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STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS IN MASSACHUSETTS AND RHODE ISLAND ANNOUNCE FIRST HUMAN CASE OF EEE THIS SUMMER

Residents urged to continue vigilance against mosquito bites

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and Rhode Island HEALTH today announced the first case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in a person. The patient, a male in his 20s from Newport County in Rhode Island, is listed in critical condition. His exposure to a mosquito carrying EEE likely occurred in the southeastern section of Massachusetts that has been identified as an area of elevated risk.

The onset of his symptoms occurred on August 5, prior to that evening's start of aerial spraying in southeastern Massachusetts. Symptoms usually present themselves within two to 10 days of exposure. Further details on his identity are not being released due to patient privacy considerations.

"Our thoughts continue to be with this patient and his family," said Director of Health David R. Gifford, MD, MPH. "While we have not had any mosquitoes test positive for EEE in Rhode Island; this case is a reminder that everyone should continue to take steps to prevent mosquito bites and get rid of standing water on their property."

Aerial spraying in southeastern Massachusetts conducted from August 5 – 7 has reduced the overall mosquito population in southeastern Massachusetts (including the likely location of exposure in this case) by 80 percent and the number of mammal-biting mosquitoes by 90 percent. Mammal-biting mosquitoes pose the greatest risk to humans.

"This is a tragic reminder of the very real threat of EEE that we're facing in Massachusetts," said DPH Commissioner John Auerbach, "Now more than ever, it's important that each of us take the simple, very effective steps to protect ourselves from getting bitten by mosquitoes."

8/16/2010

The last human case in Massachusetts was in 2008 and in Rhode Island. Massachusetts has confirmed 47 positive EEE pools in 2010. Rhode Island has not identified any EEE-positive mosquitoes. EEE is usually spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. It is a serious disease in all ages and can even cause death in some cases.

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

Avoid Mosquito Bites

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.*

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.*

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.*

More information is available on the DPH website at www.mass.gov/dph. Information about West Nile Virus (WNV) and EEE is also available by calling the DPH recorded information line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968), or the Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

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8/16/2010