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First West Nile Virus Positive Mosquitoes Found in Massachusetts

Cover up or wear bug spray to avoid getting bitten

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in mosquitoes in Massachusetts for the first time this year. WNV infection was confirmed by the State Laboratory Institute today. The mosquito sample was collected on July 6 in the city of Boston in Suffolk County. There have been no human cases of WNV or Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) so far this year.

There were seven cases of WNV in Massachusetts residents last year. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito.

“West Nile virus has made an appearance again, as we expect it will every year,” said DPH State Epidemiologist, Dr. Al DeMaria. “If you haven’t already made it a habit, start doing things to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by applying bug spray, covering up with clothing or simply moving inside if you find you are getting bitten. Getting rid of any accumulated water around your yard will also help keep more mosquitoes from breeding.”

All WNV and EEE positive results from 2011 can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/wnv.

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.

Livestock owners should also be on guard against these mosquito-borne diseases according to the Department of Agricultural Resources. In addition to horses, WNV and EEE pose serious risks to species such as pheasants, llamas, and alpacas. Horse owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. It is also not too late for horses to be vaccinated and owners should consult with their local veterinarian.

More information is available on the DPH website: www.mass.gov/dph/wnv. Information about WNV and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (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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