



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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Michigan residents reminded to protect against mosquito bites

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding residents to protect themselves from mosquito bites following the confirmation of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in the state.

As of Aug. 12, two cases of EEE have been confirmed in horses in Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties. Neither horse was vaccinated against EEE and both animals have died. There is an EEE vaccine available for horses, but not for people.

“These equine deaths indicate that EEE virus activity is increasing and provides warning that human cases could also occur,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, MDHHS chief medical executive and chief deputy director for health. “Michigan residents are urged to take precautions and protect themselves from mosquito bites.”

The southwestern region of the state has experienced outbreaks of this mosquito-borne disease in horses and people in the past, with the most recent outbreaks occurring in the early 1980s, mid-1990s and 2010. EEE is one of the most dangerous mosquito-borne diseases in the U.S., with a 33 percent fatality rate among humans who become ill and a 90 percent fatality rate among horses that become ill.

People can be infected with EEE from the bite of a mosquito carrying the virus. The disease is not spread by horse-to-horse or horse-to-human contact. In humans, signs of EEE include the sudden onset of fever, chills, body and joint aches. EEE infection can develop into severe encephalitis, resulting in headache, disorientation, tremors, seizures and paralysis. Permanent brain damage, coma and death may also occur in some cases.

Residents can stay healthy by following steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved product to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.

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- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.

Additionally, West Nile Virus activity in Michigan has increased. Health officials have identified eight infected birds and 12 positive mosquito pools in the Lower Peninsula. Mosquito-borne illness will continue to be a risk in Michigan until late fall when nighttime temperatures consistently fall below freezing.

Lastly, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development recommends that residents protect their horses by:

- Talking to their veterinarian about vaccinating horses against the disease.
- Using fans in barns and bringing horses indoors from early evening until after sunrise when mosquitoes are most prevalent.
- Using an approved insect repellent on the animals.
- Contacting a veterinarian if your animal shows signs of illness.

For more information about mosquito-borne diseases, visit Michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

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