

Tim Carroll

From: MEMA State Control (CDA) [memastatecontrol@MassMail.State.MA.US]
Sent: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 12:07 PM
Cc: Schwartz, Kurt (EPS)
Subject: DPH Press Release Re: First Human Case and First Horse Case of West Nile Virus in MA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 15, 2012

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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**STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE FIRST HUMAN CASE AND FIRST HORSE CASE OF WEST NILE
VIRUS IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Residents urged to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites

BOSTON – Wednesday, August 15, 2012 – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state this year. The patient is a resident of Middlesex County north of Boston in his 60's who was diagnosed with WNV in late July and remains hospitalized, but is recovering. Based on this finding, health officials have raised the WNV threat level to "Moderate" in Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, and Watertown.

Separately, officials have also confirmed the first case of WNV in a horse located in the town of Ludlow in Western Massachusetts, raising the WNV threat level in that town to "High."

"Today's announcement is a compelling reminder that people should take simple, common-sense steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites and the illnesses they can cause," 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. "

WNV infected mosquitoes have been found in 48 communities from nine counties so far during 2012. There were six cases of WNV in Massachusetts residents and one in a horse 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. Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. When present, WNV symptoms tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

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.

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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 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.

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