Central Michigan
District Health Department
Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

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PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

To: Local News Media

From: Central Michigan District Health Department

RE: Mosquito-Borne Diseases

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Mosquito-Borne Diseases Detected

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) has been notified by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) that several horses in the area have been infected with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Mosquito surveillance have identified active populations of mosquitoes known to transmit EEE to humans. Some of the mosquito surveillance pools have also tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). Last year (2019), 10 people were diagnosed with EEE in southern Michigan with six cases being fatal. An additional 12 people were identified with WNV. Until the weather cools and we have several hard frosts or freezes, the risk of exposure to mosquito-borne disease will persist.

While West Nile Virus is the most prevalent mosquito-borne disease in Michigan, mosquitos can also transmit St. Louis Encephalitis, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and the California group of encephalitis viruses that includes La Crosse Encephalitis. Zika Virus, another mosquito-borne disease, is not present in Michigan because the mosquito that transmits Zika is not currently found in Michigan.

Infected mosquitos can transmit EEE and WNV to animals, birds, and humans. EEE and WNV are not spread from person to person. Eastern Equine Encephalitis information found on the MDHHS Emerging Diseases website states: "*Only 4-5% of people will be become sick when infected with EEE. Some people who are infected will develop* ***chills, fever, weakness, muscle, and joint pain****. The illness may last up to two weeks. Most people with this type of EEE disease recover completely, but fatigue and weakness can last for weeks or months. Less than 1% of people who are infected will develop a serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues). About 30 percent of people who develop neurologic infection due to Eastern Equine Encephalitis will die.*"

Twenty to thirty percent of people infected with West Nile Virus will develop symptoms. Symptoms may include headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. More serious illness occurs in less than 1% of people who are infected with WNV and will develop serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. About 10 percent of people who develop neurologic infection due to West Nile Virus will die.

Anyone who is exposed to mosquito-borne disease can get sick. Young children, people over 60 years of age, and people with certain chronic conditions or weakened immune systems are at greater risk for serious disease.

What You Can Do

The overall risk of getting a mosquito transmitted disease is very low but because the illness could become life threatening, precautions should be taken. Persons who experience flu-like symptoms, high fever, severe or unusual headaches, neck stiffness, seizures or other unusual symptoms should seek medical care as soon as possible. Prevention tips include:

- Avoid activities in areas where large numbers of mosquitoes are present.
- Wear long sleeves when outdoors, especially at dusk and at dawn.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain the active ingredient DEET. When applying DEET to young children, spray DEET on a cloth, and then wipe it on a child's skin so that the eyes and hands are not sprayed. The Environmental Protection Agency has a website that can help you find a repellent that is right for you.
- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET because mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing. Whenever you use an insecticide or insect repellent, be sure to read and follow the label for use. NOTE: Vitamin B and "ultrasonic" devices are NOT effective in preventing mosquito bites.
- Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase pretreated clothing, which will repel mosquito and other insects through multiple washes.
- Drain water from potential mosquito breeding sites including flowerpots, pet bowls, clogged rain gutters, swimming pool covers, discarded tires, buckets, cans, and similar items in which mosquitoes can lay eggs.
- Make sure your window screens are kept in good repair and that all your doors are shut tightly.
- Keep your lawn mowed to reduce hiding places for mosquitos.

An increase in disease among wildlife often precedes an increased risk to humans. To report a dead bird or other dead wildlife go to: https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ORS/Survey/4. By reporting dead wildlife, you can help experts determine when mosquito-borne disease risk is increasing. More information about zoonotic and vector-borne diseases can be found at: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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