

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FURTHER INFORMATION:

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STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE SECOND HUMAN CASE OF WNV IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY; RAISE WNV THREAT LEVEL IN CAMBRIDGE

EEE threat level raised to Critical in Georgetown and Halifax after EEE diagnosis in animals

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced that a second human case of West Nile virus (WNV) has been confirmed in Middlesex County. The patient, a Cambridge man in his 70s, is currently hospitalized. The first human case of WNV this year was confirmed in another Middlesex County resident on August 15. In addition to the elevated threat level in Cambridge, the nearby communities of Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Somerville and Watertown have been raised to a “High” WNV threat level.

“Today’s announcement is a compelling indicator that the threat of mosquito-borne illness is widespread, and people should continue taking simple, common-sense steps to protect themselves and their families against mosquito bites,” said DPH Commissioner John Auerbach. “Use insect repellent, cover exposed skin, and avoid outdoor activities at dusk and after nightfall when mosquitoes are their most active.”

“Both Middlesex County cases have been identified as Cambridge residents,” said Claude Jacob, the city’s Chief Public Health Officer and director of the Cambridge Public Health Department. “Our department has been working with city and community partners to inform residents about the increased risk of West Nile virus this summer. We’re also working with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project and city departments to reduce mosquito breeding grounds.”

Health officials also announced today that a diagnosis of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) has been confirmed in a horse stabled in Georgetown and in an alpaca stabled in Halifax. As a result, the EEE threat level has been raised to “Critical” in Georgetown, and to “High” in the nearby communities of Boxford, Groveland, Newbury, Rowley, and West Newbury. The EEE threat level has been raised to “Critical” in Halifax and to “High” in neighboring East Bridgewater, Hanson, Pembroke, and Plympton. Consistent with EEE threat level guidelines, DPH strongly recommends that evening outdoor events are curtailed in all these communities for the remainder of the mosquito season.

WNV infected mosquitoes have been found in 67 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.

There were two cases of EEE in August of last year acquired in Massachusetts, including a fatal case in a Bristol County man. EEE activity in both 2010 and 2011 raised public concern and prompted DPH to work with a panel of experts to evaluate and enhance the state's surveillance and response program. EEE is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is a serious disease in all ages and can even cause death.

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.

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. Owners should also speak with their veterinarian about mosquito repellents approved for use in animals and vaccinations to prevent WNV and EEE. 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.