

# STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS RAISE EEE RISK LEVEL TO HIGH IN FOUR COMMUNITIES

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**BOSTON** – August 29, 2013 - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the detection of mammal-biting mosquitoes infected with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Easton, Raynham, Taunton and West Bridgewater. As a result, health officials have raised the EEE threat level to “High” in these four communities. DPH urges communities designated as “High” to curtail planned evening outdoor events for the remainder of the mosquito season.

“We are seeing EEE activity in mosquitoes in scattered locations, including in several mammal-biting species, so it remains very important for people to take precautions to avoid getting bit,” said DPH Public Health Veterinarian Catherine Brown. “People need to continue to use insect repellent, cover up exposed skin, and avoid being outdoors at dusk and after nightfall when mosquitoes are at their most active in the highest risk areas.”

The surrounding towns of Norton, Mansfield, Dighton, Berkley, Sharon and Stoughton have been raised to “Moderate” risk for EEE due to their proximity to the area of identified risk.

There has been one confirmed human case of EEE in a Massachusetts resident this year. In 2012, there were seven cases in humans of EEE in Massachusetts. EEE is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is a serious disease in all ages and can cause death.

The first symptoms of EEE are fever (often 103° to 106°F), stiff neck, headache, and lack of energy. These symptoms show up three to ten days after a bite from an infected mosquito. Inflammation and swelling of the brain, called encephalitis, is the most dangerous and common serious complication. The disease generally worsens quickly, and some patients may go into a coma within a week.

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

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### **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 2013, can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at [www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito](http://www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito) or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

DPH has produced a series of 30-second videos on how to prevent mosquito and tick bites and the illnesses that can result. All videos can be found at [www.mass.gov/MosquitoesAndTicks](http://www.mass.gov/MosquitoesAndTicks). Media outlets are encouraged to share these videos on their websites. Instructions on how to embed the videos into external websites are included on this webpage.

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