



News Release

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For Immediate Release

State health officials announce four additional human cases of West Nile virus in Massachusetts

Residents urged to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites

BOSTON (September 4, 2018) - The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced four more human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) in the state this year. The cases include: a man in his 40s from Middlesex County who is hospitalized due to his illness; a man in his 60s from Bristol County who is hospitalized due to his illness; a woman in her 20s from Essex County who was hospitalized during her illness and a woman in her 80s from Suffolk County who was hospitalized during her illness.

This brings the total number of WNV cases in Massachusetts this year to nine. A horse from Hampshire County and a llama from Worcester County have also been diagnosed with WNV this year.

“The risk for additional people to get infected with WNV is ongoing,” said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “It is extremely important for people to take steps to avoid mosquito bites including using repellents, wearing clothing to reduce exposed skin, dumping standing water, and moving indoors when mosquitoes are present.”

“Even though Labor Day is the unofficial last day of summer in many people’s minds, September is still a month when we typically see many of our human cases of WNV,” said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown. “Today’s announcement illustrates why we continue to urge everyone to be vigilant about avoiding mosquito bites.”

In 2017, there were 6 human cases of WNV infection identified in Massachusetts.

WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. 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.

Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites. Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to 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 the 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, can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

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