



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MDHHS reports one new human case of mosquito-borne EEE in Southwest Michigan and new counties with affected animals

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For Immediate Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 20, 2019

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Eastern Equine Encephalitis remains an ongoing threat in Southwest Michigan

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories has confirmed Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in an adult resident of Calhoun County. Eight cases of EEE have now been confirmed in residents of Barry, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren counties, including three deaths.

“The increasing geographic spread and increasing number of EEE cases in humans and animals indicate that the risk for EEE is ongoing,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, MDHHS chief medical executive and chief deputy for health. “We continue to urge

Michiganders to protect themselves against mosquito bites until the first hard frost.”

Additionally, testing at the Michigan State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has recently identified EEE in one animal each in Calhoun, Jackson and Montcalm counties. As of Sept. 20, EEE has been confirmed in 21 animals from 11 counties: Barry, Berrien, Calhoun, Cass, Genesee, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lapeer, Montcalm, St. Joseph, and Van Buren. There is an EEE vaccine available for horses, but not for people. Additional animal cases are under investigation.

MDHHS is encouraging local officials in the affected counties to consider postponing, rescheduling or cancelling outdoor activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly activities that involve children. This would include events such as late evening sports practices or games or outdoor music practices. The MDHHS recommendation is being made out of an abundance of caution to protect the public health and applies until the first hard frost of the year.

EEE is one of the most dangerous mosquito-borne diseases in the United States, with a 33 percent fatality rate in people who become ill. People can be infected with EEE from the bite of a mosquito carrying the viruses. Persons younger than age 15 and over age 50 are at greatest risk of severe disease following infection.

Across Michigan, residents can stay healthy by following steps to avoid mosquito bites:

- Apply insect repellents that contain the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved product to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer’s directions for use.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitoes outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitoes may lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.

Signs of EEE include the sudden onset of fever, chills, body and joint aches which can progress to a severe encephalitis, resulting in headache, disorientation, tremors, seizures and paralysis. Permanent brain damage, coma and death may also occur in some cases.

For more information about mosquito-borne diseases, visit Michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

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