

HOLLISTON BOARD OF HEALTH

HEALTH OFFICIALS SEE INCREASED RISK OF MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES IN MASSACHUSETTS *Residents are urged to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites*

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HOLLISTON – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Holliston Board of Health want residents to know that the risk of mosquito-borne illness is on the rise in Massachusetts. These mosquito-borne illnesses include West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE).

This summer, health officials have seen an increased amount of early season EEE activity in mosquitoes in southeastern Massachusetts, two horses infected with EEE in Worcester County, and a rise in the number of WNV-infected mosquitoes from multiple areas of the state. Locally, no WNV or EEE activity has been identified in Holliston so far this year.

WNV and EEE are spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. People under age 15 or over age 50 are at greatest risk for serious illness from EEE, and people over age 50 are at higher risk for severe infection from WNV.

By taking a few, common-sense precautions, you can help protect yourself and your family:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **Be aware of peak mosquito hours.** The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that take place during evening or early morning hours. Otherwise, take extra care to use bug spray and protective clothing.
- **Clothing can help** reduce mosquito bites. Although it may be difficult to do when it's hot, wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Apply bug spray** when you go outdoors. Use a bug spray with **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **permethrin**, **picaridin** (KBR 3023), **IR3535**, or **oil of lemon eucalyptus** [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] 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. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to 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 getting rid of 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. Fix any holes or tears in screens, so mosquitoes can't get in.

Horse owners are encouraged to vaccinate their horses and reduce their horses' exposure to mosquitoes. Signs of illness in any horse should be evaluated by a veterinarian.

While Holliston Board of Health continues to work closely with the DPH and other agencies, locally we are actively undertaking distribution of informational fact sheets available at Town Hall, the Public Library and Parks and Recreation Department. Holliston participates in the Central Massachusetts Mosquito Control Program. Residents may call 508 393-3055 for investigation of complaints about mosquitoes and to schedule spraying. There is no charge for this service.

More information about mosquito-borne illness and levels of EEE activity in Massachusetts during 2010 can be found on the DPH website at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv>. Recorded information about WNV and EEE is also available by calling the DPH Public Health Information Line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968).