

## STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE MODERATE RISK FOR WEST NILE VIRUS IN 36 NEW COMMUNITIES

*Residents urged to use bug spray to avoid getting bitten*

**BOSTON** (August 08, 2017) — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced that 36 additional communities are now at moderate risk for West Nile virus (WNV), [bringing the total number of communities at moderate risk to 59 spread across eight counties](#). Moderate risk means mosquito activity is substantial enough that people should use personal protection to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. There have been no human cases of WNV this year.

The eight counties are Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and Suffolk counties. The Pioneer Valley in western Massachusetts and Worcester and its surrounding communities are experiencing more West Nile virus positive mosquito activity this year than in a typical season, said DPH Deputy State Epidemiologist Dr. Catherine Brown.

“The Boston area is usually a focus of WNV activity, but this year we are seeing evidence of widespread WNV infection in mosquitoes with particularly significant activity in and around Worcester and in the Pioneer Valley,” Dr. Brown said.

“I encourage everyone to use the tools of prevention, including applying mosquito repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient according to the directions on the label, wearing clothing to reduce exposed skin when weather permits, draining standing water to prevent mosquito breeding and repairing window screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home,” she said. Dr. Brown warned that “August and early September are when we see most of our WNV infections in people.”

WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. In 2016, there were 16 human cases of WNV infection identified in Massachusetts. While WNV can infect persons 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 an EPA-registered ingredient (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 in areas of high risk.

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 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 suspected of having 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 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](http://www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito) or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

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