



TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

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STATE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE FIRST HUMAN CASE AND SECOND HORSE CASE OF EEE DIAGNOSED IN PLYMOUTH COUNTY

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PLYMOUTH, MA – Today, August 29, 2024, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced the first confirmed human and second confirmed horse diagnosed with Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in Plymouth County.

The Town of Plymouth remains at a High-Risk status with no risk level changes associated with these findings.

“Plymouth remains vigilant regarding the safety of our community as it pertains to the EEE virus,” **said Plymouth’s Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Michelle Bratti.** “As an already established safety precaution, public parks and fields will remain closed from dusk until dawn. We urge residents and visitors to follow CDC-recommended strategies to reduce the risk of mosquito-borne illness exposure. We are committed to focusing on the health and well-being of the Plymouth community regarding this rare but serious and potentially life-threatening virus.”

The positive human and horse cases occurred before aerial spraying took place. Truck-mounted ground spraying will continue for preplanned routes via the Plymouth County Mosquito Control Project and residents can request spraying or opt out of having their home sprayed at <https://www.plymouthmosquito.org/>.

“The symptoms of EEE look and feel like a mild case of the flu,” **said Director of Public Health, Karen Keane.** “Fever, chills and body aches may appear a few days after being bit by an infected mosquito. Contact your primary care physician with any medical concerns. The EEE virus can only be spread to humans through an infected mosquito bite; it cannot spread from human to human or from horse to human. Self-protection is the best defense. Mosquito activity continues until the first hard frost which is usually when the temperature hits 28 degrees.”

Both aerial and ground spraying, along with the closing of public parks and fields from dusk to dawn are some measures that will mitigate further spread of EEE. People also have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

Being consistent about taking the following recommended steps will help prevent mosquito bites:

Avoid Mosquito Bites

- Apply Insect Repellent when Outdoors. Use a repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient, such as DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), or oil of lemon eucalyptus (p-menthane-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 percent 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 draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty 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 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 West Nile virus (WNV) and EEE.

If an animal is suspected of having WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to the Department of Agricultural Resources, 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 [Mosquito-borne Diseases | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mosquito-borne-diseases), which is updated daily, or by calling the DPH Division of Epidemiology at 617-983-6800.

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