

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West Nile Virus Detected in Saginaw County

(SAGINAW) – Experts from the Saginaw County Health Department and Saginaw County Mosquito Abatement Commission (SCMAC) are encouraging residents to protect themselves against mosquito-borne diseases following recent detections of West Nile virus (WNV) in two birds within Saginaw County and reports of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in other parts of the state.

People can be infected with WNV, EEE, and California Group encephalitis virus from the bite of a mosquito carrying the viruses. Therefore, both organizations stress the importance of taking precautions against mosquito bites, especially during activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly activities that involve children:

- Apply insect repellants that contain the active ingredient DEET or other EPA registered products to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Children under 2 months old should not use repellent but rather be covered in clothing that covers exposed skin; strollers and baby carriers should be covered with mosquito netting.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Also apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites.
- Maintain window and door screening to help keep mosquitos outside.
- Empty water from mosquito breeding sites around the home such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires, or similar sites where mosquitos may lay eggs.
- Use nets and/or fans over outside eating areas.

MORE

SCMAC continues to monitor mosquito and bird populations for mosquito-borne disease including WNV and EEE. While no EEE has been detected in Saginaw County to date, WNV has been found in both mosquito and bird populations. Mosquito control efforts have been ongoing throughout the season, including community spraying for adult mosquitoes and treating standing water -- likely sources of larval mosquitoes. SCMAC relies on surveillance to steer control operations and uses multiple strategies to control mosquito populations.

Infections can occur even when the mosquito bite numbers are low. While infections rarely result in severe illness, the diseases can affect anyone; however, persons younger than 15 and over the age of 50 are at the greatest risk of severe illness following infection. EEE is of particular concern as it one **of the most dangerous of the mosquito-borne diseases. EEE infections that result in illness have a 33 percent fatality rate.**

Signs of WNV and EEE include the sudden onset of fever, chills, body and joint aches. Symptoms of California encephalitis virus include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and lethargy. The diseases can develop into severe encephalitis, resulting in headaches, disorientation, tremors, seizures and paralysis. Permanent brain damage, coma, and death may also occur in some cases. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should visit a health care provider or emergency room. There is an EEE vaccine available for horses, but not for people.

Further information about mosquito-borne disease is available at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases or on the Saginaw County Health Department website at www.saginawpublichealth.org.

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