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**\* \* \* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \* \* \***

**Health Dept. urges residents and visitors to protect themselves from mosquitoes**  
*State reports first human case of EEE, in Plymouth County*

(Provincetown, MA) — Although much of our collective attention is focused on staying safe from COVID-19, summertime brings with it a variety of additional reasons to be cautious. The Provincetown Health Department wants the public to be aware that eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) is a growing risk in Southeastern Massachusetts and encourages people to take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

On Monday, Aug. 3, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) reported the first human case of EEE this year in Middleborough. In response, DPH has raised the risk level in two Plymouth County communities, Middleborough and Carver, to critical. The previous week, DPH had raised the risk level to high in those two communities, because of an increase in the number of mosquitoes samples found testing positive for the virus. Thus far this year, the EEE virus has been found in a total of 16 mosquito samples statewide. The virus was also confirmed this year in mosquito samples in Franklin County.

In 2019, a total of 12 people contracted the disease in Massachusetts. Though none were on Cape Cod, mosquito samples testing positive for EEE were found in Truro and Wellfleet, as well as in Falmouth and Bourne.

DPH is working with the local communities, local Mosquito Control Projects, and other mosquito control experts to coordinate surveillance and discuss appropriate public health response activities.

Here's what you need to know:

- **Avoid mosquito bites.** Use an EPA-registered insect repellent according to instructions on the product label when outdoors. These include: DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535. DEET products should not be used on infants younger than two months and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Permethrin should be used only on clothing, not on skin. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children younger than three years.
- **Dusk to dawn is peak mosquito time.** Schedule outdoor activities to avoid these hours, when mosquitoes are most active.
- **Wear long sleeves and long pants** when outdoors, especially between dusk and dawn, to help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

- **Mosquito-proof your home** by eliminating any standing water and repairing holes in screens. Mosquitoes can breed in even the smallest amount of water that's left in place for four days or more. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change the water in birdbaths frequently.

- **There is no treatment.** Although EEE is still a rare disease, there is no available treatment for humans. The symptoms of EEE are fever, stiff neck, headache, lack of energy, joint pain, and muscle pain.

- **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 every four or five days 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 EEE and West Nile virus. If an animal is suspected of having WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to Mass. DAR, Division of Animal Health, by calling 617-626-1795 and to the Department of Public Health (DPH) by calling 617-983-6800.

#### **One last important item to note for the summer:**

- **You cannot get COVID-19 from a mosquito bite.** With the beautiful summer weather, more people are spending more time outside. During the COVID-19 epidemic, some people might worry if they could come down with COVID-19 if they get a mosquito bite.

Official guidance from the World Health Organization says there's no information or evidence to suggest that the new coronavirus could be transmitted through mosquito bites. The coronavirus is a respiratory virus, and the main mode of transmission are viral droplets released into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

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