

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



*Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)
11 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Phone 1-800-821-5821 / Fax 207-287-7443*

****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: York, Cumberland, Androscoggin and Oxford County Local Health Officers, Municipal Officers, and Infection Control Practitioners, Labs, School Nurses, and EMA; Public Health Required

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Massachusetts Resident

DATE: October 27, 2008

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Massachusetts Resident

Background: On October 22, 2008, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) was notified of a Massachusetts resident that tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). The 73 year old man from northeast Massachusetts developed symptoms of illness on September 21, 2008 while vacationing in Maine. After several weeks of hospitalization, he was transferred to a facility in Massachusetts where his prognosis remains guarded.

During the two weeks prior to his illness, the patient traveled in both New Hampshire and Maine and spent significant amounts of time outdoors. The investigation suggests the patient acquired EEE in the area surrounding Gorham (Coos County), New Hampshire or Naples (Cumberland County), Maine.

EEE was first detected in Maine in 2005 among horses, mosquitoes and birds in York County. Earlier this fall, Maine CDC reported that a mosquito pool from Arundel (York County) and a horse from Lebanon (York County) were positive for EEE. This report of a human case is the first person with EEE with possible exposure in Maine. Maine CDC had regarded southwest Maine as the perceived area of greatest risk; however this case reinforces the need to consider other areas of Maine as potentially at risk of EEE.

Recommendations: EEE is a serious and often deadly disease in all ages, and is usually spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquito activity in Maine drops significantly as temperatures fall below freezing.

Maine CDC's primary recommendation in response to this patient's diagnosis is for municipalities to consider the development of mosquito disease education, control and response plans to prepare for spring and summer 2009, including consideration of:

- ⇒ Mosquito testing and surveillance;
- ⇒ Integrated pest management;
- ⇒ Dissemination of information.

Maine CDC, along with the State Vector Borne Work Group, anticipates convening regional meetings this winter to invite municipalities and other interested stakeholders to discuss further prevention and control strategies for the 2009 season.

Maine residents are also reminded to take action to prevent EEE and other arboviral infections by limiting one's exposure to mosquitoes. In areas that have not experienced several hard frosts this fall, people should consider using insect repellent or mosquito netting over infant carriers; wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors; and being aware that mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk.

For More Information: For more information on EEE, arboviruses, and personal protection strategies, go to the Maine CDC EEE website (www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ddc/arbovirus/index.htm). Please report suspect cases by calling the Maine CDC 24-hour disease reporting and consultation line, 1-800-821-5821.