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HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS URGE MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS AWARENESS



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Tallahassee, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health is advising residents there has been an increase in mosquito-borne disease activity in several counties across the state. Although no human cases have been reported, several horses and emus have tested positive for Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. West Nile virus (WNV) and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) virus are also present in mosquitoes in Florida. The risk of disease transmission through bites of infected mosquitoes to humans has increased.

The department recommends the following tips for residents and visitors:

- Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and take basic precautions to help limit exposure.
- Be aware that emus infected with EEE virus can also potentially expose owners and other animals who are in direct contact with their feces, meat, organs, blood and bodily tissues. Please contact your veterinarian or county health department for information on how to safely handle potentially infected emus.
- Some wildlife can also be infected with EEE or other mosquito-borne viruses. Do not harvest wild game that appears sick, wear gloves when dressing or preparing meat from carcasses of healthy appearing game, and cook meat well.
- For information on how to prevent EEE virus infection in horses, emus and camelids (alpacas and llamas, etc.) though vaccination, please consult with your veterinarian, or the University of Florida College of Large Animal Medicine.
- If you suspect your animal has EEE, consult your veterinarian.
- EEE is a reportable animal disease. Animals suspected or confirmed with the virus must be reported to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry. For more information about the EEE virus or how to report, visit the Division of Animal Industry website at, <https://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Animal-Industry>.

To protect yourself from mosquitoes, you should remember to “**Drain and Cover**”:

DRAIN standing water weekly to stop mosquitoes from multiplying.

- Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard old tires, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pet's water bowls at least once or twice a week.

- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent.

- Clothing - Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.
- Repellent - Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing.
 - Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, and IR3535 are effective.
 - Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than 2 months old.
 - Permethrin insecticide can also be applied to clothing and gear (but not skin)

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before you apply a repellent. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) are generally recommended. Other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved repellents contain picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or IR3535. These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients to be listed on the product label.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing.
- In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of three years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than two months old.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child's skin and clothing.
- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house.

- Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

For more information on what repellent is right for you, see: www.epa.gov/insect-repellents

The department continues to conduct statewide surveillance for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus infections, Eastern equine encephalitis, St. Louis encephalitis, malaria, chikungunya and dengue. Residents of Florida are encouraged to report dead birds via the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's site www.myfwc.com.

For more information about mosquito-borne diseases including current surveillance data, visit DOH's website at www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/mosquito-borne-diseases or contact your county health department.

Information from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) about equine infection with EEE and WNV can be found at: www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-

[Offices/Animal-Industry/Agriculture-Industry/Horse-Equine/Florida-s-Reportable-Equine-Disease-Map/Eastern-Equine-Encephalitis.](#)

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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