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**July 27, 2010 - For immediate release:**

## **EEE Alert Level Raised in Southeastern Massachusetts**

### **Health officials recommend curtailing evening events**

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**BOSTON** — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today that the risk for eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in people has increased in a large part of southeastern Massachusetts. Lakeville and Middleborough were already considered to be at high risk for human disease due to earlier EEE positive mosquito samples and the death of a horse from EEE in Middleborough. Today, the state expanded the high risk area to include the towns of Acushnet, Berkley, Bridgewater, Carver, Duxbury, Fairhaven, Freetown, Halifax, Kingston, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Plympton, Raynham, Rochester and Taunton. The towns immediately surrounding that area are at moderate risk.

Mosquitoes collected in Fairhaven and Duxbury today tested positive for the EEE virus. One infected mosquito was identified as a mammal biter, making it more likely to transmit infection to people. So far this year, 10 collections of mosquitoes have tested positive for EEE virus.

The Department of Public Health asks cities and towns in the high risk areas to curtail evening events at dusk and dawn. Outdoor events should be rescheduled for different times of the day. Even if you are wearing long sleeves and using repellent, it is prudent at this time to take extra precautions.

"We look at a number of factors when we assess risk, including mosquito findings," said DPH Commissioner John Auerbach. "Both mosquitoes and virus were early this year, and a horse was sick with EEE much earlier in the season than we usually expect. If you also consider the warm weather plus recent rain in the area, the evidence points to the fact that people are at more risk, and everyone must take precautions to prevent illness."

There was one human case of EEE during 2008; however, there were 13 cases with six deaths from 2004 through 2006. EEE is usually spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. EEE is a serious disease in all ages and can even cause death in some cases.

"There is a complicating factor this year," said DPH State Epidemiologist Dr. Al DeMaria. "The numbers of mosquitoes are generally low and people may not feel they are getting many bites. A high proportion of those mosquitoes are infected with EEE, which makes any bite a greater risk, and we are expecting a resurgence of mosquitoes after last week's heavy rains that will primarily be the type of mosquito that likes to bite people."

Mosquito testing results from 2009 can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at [www.mass.gov/dph/wnv](http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv).

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

## Avoid Mosquito Bites

- **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.
- **Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites.** Wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.
- **Apply Insect Repellent When Outdoors.** Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 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% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

## 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 either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.
- **Install or Repair Screens.** Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

More information about EEE and EEE risk is available on the DPH website: [www.mass.gov/dph/wnv](http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv).

Information about West Nile Virus (WNV) and EEE is also available by calling the DPH recorded information line at 1-866-MASS-WNV (1-866-627-7968) or the Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.