



Eastern Highlands Health District

4 South Eagleville Road • Mansfield CT 06268 • Tel: (860) 429-3325 • Fax: (860) 429-3321 • Web: www.EHHD.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus Activity in the Area**

***Residents of the Eastern Highlands Health District are urged to protect themselves from mosquito bites.***

The State of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program announced on July 31 that mosquitoes trapped in the Pachaug State Forest in Voluntown have tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEE). These results represented the first EEE positive mosquitoes identified in the state by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) this year. The mosquitoes were *Culiseta melanura*, a predominately bird-biting species

More recently, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture announced August 16th a second equine case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) for 2019. A fifteen-year-old female Mustang horse located in Columbia, CT, was observed on August 11, 2019 by stable attendants as having difficulty breathing, acting distressed and unable to stand in an open field. The horse was not current on its vaccinations for rabies, EEE, or West Nile Virus. The Mustang was humanely euthanized. Diagnostic samples collected at the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (CVMDL) at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratories were confirmed positive for EEE virus.

“Both the positive mosquitoes in Voluntown, and the positive equine case in Columbia are concerning. These early season indicators support the potential for an increase in virus activity for our area as the mosquito seasons continues” stated Robert Miller, Director of Health for the Eastern Highlands Health District. “We cannot stress enough the importance of residents to act to prevent mosquito bites.”

Eastern equine encephalitis is a rare but serious disease in people. On average there are 6 cases each year in the United States. In Connecticut, outbreaks of EEE have occurred sporadically among horses and domestic pheasants since 1938. The last major outbreak of EEE in the state occurred in 2013 and resulted in one human fatality. In humans, symptoms of EEE appear 4-10 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. EEE infection can result in one of two types of illness, systemic or encephalitic (involving swelling of the brain). The type of illness will depend on the age of the person and other host factors. It is possible that some people who become infected with EEE may be asymptomatic. Systemic infection has an abrupt onset and is characterized by chills, fever, malaise, arthralgia, and myalgia. Signs and symptoms in



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encephalitic patients are: fever, headache, irritability, restlessness, drowsiness, anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea, cyanosis, convulsions, and coma.

Approximately a third of all people with EEE die from the disease. Death usually occurs 2 to 10 days after onset of symptoms but can occur much later. Of those who recover, many are left with disabling and progressive mental and residual abnormalities, which can range from minimal brain dysfunction to severe intellectual impairment, personality disorders, seizures, paralysis, and cranial nerve dysfunction. Many patients with severe sequelae die within a few years. No human vaccine against EEE infection or specific antiviral treatment for clinical EEE infections is available.

*To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes residents should:*

*Minimize time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.*

*Be sure door and window screens are tight-fitting and in good repair.*

*Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are more active. Clothing should be light colored and made of tightly woven materials that keep mosquitoes away from the skin.*

*Use mosquito netting when sleeping outdoors or in an unscreened structure and to protect small babies when outdoors.*

*Consider the use of mosquito repellent, according to directions, when it is necessary to be outdoors.*

For information on EEE and other mosquito-borne diseases, what can be done to prevent getting bitten by mosquitoes, the latest mosquito test results and human infections, EHHD residents can visit the Connecticut Mosquito Management Program web site at <https://portal.ct.gov/mosquito> , the Health District website at [www.ehhd.org](http://www.ehhd.org) .

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