



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Eastern Equine Encephalitis detected in Escambia County

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Escambia County Health Department announced that two horses from Escambia County tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) during August. A third horse in Escambia County tested positive for EEE in February of this year.

Mosquito borne viruses have also been reported in neighboring counties. Baldwin County has reported one probable human case of EEE, and two EEE positive sentinel chicken flocks. Mobile County has reported one probable human case of West Nile Virus (WNV), and four EEE positive sentinel chicken flocks. Washington County has reported three horses tested positive for EEE.

“As we move from summer into the fall of the year many people are continuing to enjoy outdoor activities, it is imperative that residents take every effort to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes,” said Escambia County Health Department Environmentalist Jason Gurganus. “Keep your mosquito repellent with you at all times when you are working or recreating outdoors.”

EEE, West Nile Virus (WNV), and other mosquito-borne viruses are transmitted from bird to mosquito to bird. Occasionally, when bird hosts are scarce, or mosquito populations increase, the same mosquitoes will take blood from mammals, including horses and humans. Humans and horses can sometimes become ill from the infection. The likelihood of transmission to humans and horses can be decreased by personal mosquito avoidance and the use of EEE and WNV vaccine in horses. There is no vaccine available for humans, health officials said.

“It is reasonable to assume that mosquito-borne viruses are likely circulating between mosquitoes and birds in all parts of Escambia County,” said Escambia County Health Department Environmentalist Casey Grant. “Everyone should try to avoid exposure to mosquitoes.”

Mosquitoes that can spread these viruses among birds are commonly found in urban and suburban communities as well as rural, freshwater swamp areas. They will breed readily in storm sewers, ditches, waste lagoons and in artificial containers around one’s home. Health

officials said it is imperative that homeowners do a careful inspection around their homes to be sure nothing holds water for longer than three days.

Mosquito-borne virus surveillance has been conducted statewide for the past five years. During that time, EEE, WNV, St. Louis Encephalitis Virus, and La Crosse Encephalitis Virus have been detected. Epidemiologists point out that EEE can be more dangerous to people and other mammals than other mosquito-borne viruses, but that the same mosquito prevention measures reduce exposures to both. The health department will continue to notify officials of test results and recommended methods of prevention.

Since mosquitoes are commonly found throughout much of Alabama, health officials offer practical strategies for the mosquito season:

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; CLOTHING AND AROMATICS

- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothes to help prevent mosquitoes from reaching the skin and to retain less heat, making yourself less “attractive” to mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are more attracted to dark colors.
- When possible, wear long sleeves and long pants.
- Avoid perfumes, colognes, fragrant hair sprays, lotions and soaps, which attract mosquitoes.

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; REPELLENTS

- Follow the label instructions when applying repellents. Permethrin repellents are only for clothes – not for application on the skin.
- When using repellents avoid contact with the eyes, lips and nasal membranes. Use concentrations of less than 10 percent when applying DEET – containing products on children.
- Apply DEET repellent on arms, legs and other exposed areas but never under clothing.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Citronella candles and repellents containing citronella can help, but their range is limited. Herbals such as cedar, geranium, pennyroyal, lavender, cinnamon, and garlic are not very effective.

#### PERSONAL PROTECTION; AROUND THE HOME

- Mosquito activities peaks at dusk and again at dawn; restrict outdoor activity during these hours.
- Keep windows and door screens in good condition.
- Replace porch lights with yellow light bulbs that will attract fewer insects.
- Mosquitoes breed in standing water; empty all water from old tires, cans, jars, buckets, drums, plastic wading pools, toys, and other containers.
- Clean clogged gutters.
- Remove the rim from potted plants and replace water in plant/flower vases weekly.
- Replenish pet watering dishes daily and rinse bird baths twice weekly.
- Fill tree holes and depressions left by fallen trees with dirt or sand.
- Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito fish or use larvicide “doughnuts.”