

For Immediate Release - July 16, 2015

**State Health Officials Announce Season's First Positive Mosquito Sample for West Nile Virus
Residents urged to cover up, use bug spray to avoid getting bitten**

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in a mosquito in Massachusetts for the first time this year. WNV infection was confirmed by the State Public Health Laboratory today in a mosquito sample which was collected on July 8 in the Town of Sheffield. No human or animal cases of WNV or Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) have been detected so far this year. There is no elevated risk level or risk level change associated with this finding.

“While no human or animal cases of WNV or Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) have been detected so far this year – and there is no elevated risk level or risk level change associated with this finding — this is confirmation that WNV is circulating in Massachusetts again this summer. It should serve as a reminder of the need for personal protection from the threat of mosquito-borne illness,” said DPH State Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Catherine Brown. “Protection includes using mosquito repellent with an EPA-approved ingredient according to the directions on the label, using clothing to reduce exposed skin when weather permits, draining standing water to prevent mosquito breeding and repairing window screens to keep mosquitoes out of your home.”

WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. In 2014, there were six human cases of WNV infection identified in Massachusetts. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. When present, WNV symptoms tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

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

Avoid Mosquito Bites

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.

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.

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.

Protect Your Animals

Animal owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools — especially after heavy rains. Water troughs provide excellent mosquito breeding habitats and should be flushed out at least once a week during the summer months to reduce mosquitoes near paddock areas. Horse owners should keep horses in indoor stalls at night to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. Owners should also speak with their veterinarian about mosquito repellents approved for use in animals and vaccinations to prevent WNV and EEE. If an animal is diagnosed with WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to DAR, Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795 and to the Department of Public Health (DPH) by calling 617-983-6800.

More information, including all WNV and EEE positive results, can be found on the Arbovirus Surveillance Information web page at www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito or by calling the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.