Public Health in Action—EEE

The recent spread of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Michigan not only put public health to the test, but also put on display the team approach needed to address a public health emergency. Michigan saw as many cases of EEE in 2019 as were diagnosed in the previous 10 years combined, presenting a need to take an aggressive approach to addressing the problem.

In 2019, 48 animal cases and 10 human cases of EEE were identified in Michigan. Unfortunately, six people passed away as a result. Those who survived are faced with potential long term disability and brain damage. Within the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) region, only one case of EEE was identified, that being a horse in Montcalm County. Despite this single occurrence, the risk to local residents was real, showing the need for a public health response.

Key MMDHD staff met to develop and implement a plan that would notify the public quickly about the threat and how it would be addressed. Letters were sent home with students to advise families about the importance of not spending time outside at dusk, using insect repellent, maintaining window and door screens, and emptying pools of standing water. Environmental health, emergency preparedness and administrative staff shared vital information with residents by visiting homes and businesses with information on aerial spraying of the insecticide Merus 3.0, which was scheduled to take place in several townships. Staff responded to phone calls from concerned residents. Public information was shared via the news media, the MMDHD website and social media. This coordinated effort helped to lessen the risk of EEE exposure by raising awareness for area residents.

The onset of cold weather has reduced the risk of EEE. For more information on this and other vector-borne diseases, visit www.michigan.gov/eee or www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

Flu Season Activity

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that influenza activity in Michigan is “sporadic” as of early November 2019. However, the flu season has just begun. Influenza activity is unpredictable and typically peaks between December and February. Getting the flu shot is important in protecting the health of patients, families and communities.

Health care providers can access important updates through Michigan Flu Focus, a weekly newsletter that offers information on influenza surveillance, reporting, testing, updates of interest and educational resources. The report can be found at: www.michigan.gov/CDinfo.

Getting the flu vaccine has never been more convenient. The vaccine is available at a variety of locations, including doctor’s offices, many pharmacies and MMDHD clinics. For additional information, visit: www.cdc.gov/flu or contact Sarah Doak, RN, Division Director, at sdoak@mmdhd.org.
For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:

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