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Two Montcalm County horses test positive for EEE

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has confirmed two cases of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in horses from Montcalm County. This comes just days after the first case was announced in a horse from Clare County.

EEE is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes to both animals and people. While it cannot be passed between mammals, such as from horses to humans, the recent discovery of cases in horses is a sign that the disease is in the area.

Mosquitos infected with EEE are primarily found in and around swamps and bogs, and while the risk is highest for those who work or play in these areas, we all should take precautions when it comes to mosquitos.

Symptoms of EEE in humans include the sudden onset of fever, chills and body and joint aches. EEE infection can develop into severe encephalitis, resulting in headaches, disorientation, tremors, seizures, and paralysis. Permanent brain damage, coma, and death may also occur in some cases. People over 50 years of age and under 15 years of age are at increased risk for serious disease.

Symptoms in horses can include fever, head pressing, wandering, and stumbling, and can progress to an inability to stand.

EEE is one of the most dangerous mosquito-borne diseases in the United States, with a 30 percent fatality rate among humans who become ill and a 90 percent fatality rate in horses that become ill. For these reasons, and because it only takes one bite from an infected mosquito to transmit the virus, Michiganders are advised to protect themselves and their animals from mosquito bites.

Ways you can protect yourself and your family include:

- Avoiding outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, when mosquitos are most active.
- Using insect repellent that contains the active ingredient DEET, or other U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved product to exposed skin or clothing, and always follow the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors. Apply insect repellent to clothing to help prevent bites. Permethrin is a particularly effective repellent for clothing.
- Maintaining window and door screens to help keep mosquitos outside.
- Emptying water from mosquito breeding sites around the home, such as buckets, unused kiddie pools, old tires or similar sites where mosquitos may lay eggs.
- Using nets and/or fans over outdoor eating areas.

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2- EEE

Ways you can protect your horses and other domestic animals include:

- Vaccinating horses against EEE
- Placing horses and livestock in a barn under fans from dusk to dawn
- Using an insect repellent on animals that is approved for the species
- Eliminating standing water on your property and changing water in buckets and bowls at least once a day.
- Contacting your veterinarian if a horse shows signs of illness,

Mosquito-borne illnesses, like EEE will continue to pose a risk to both animals and humans until late fall when nighttime temperatures consistently fall below freezing.

For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/eee and www.cdc.gov/eee.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

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