



News Release

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To: All Media
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Re: EEE Found in Sentinel Flock

(New Hanover County)— Local health officials urge people to protect themselves from mosquito bites and the risk of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Samples from sentinel chicken flocks in New Hanover County tested positive for an indicator of increased Eastern Equine Encephalitis activity in the area.

“People need to protect themselves by preventing mosquito bites and making their environments less mosquito-friendly,” said David Rice, New Hanover County Health Director. “Minimize unprotected outdoor activity at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active, and apply insect repellent according to label instructions.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend several repellents against mosquitoes – DEET, picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus. According to the CDC, oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years old. Consumers should look for products that contain the CDC-recommended ingredients, and should read and follow all label instructions.

Exposure to both mosquitoes and ticks can be limited by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks. People should also check themselves and their families for ticks when they are in tick-prone areas.

While rare in humans, EEE can be serious and even fatal when it occurs. Approximately fifty percent of human EEE cases are fatal, with young children and the elderly most at risk. Therapy is limited to treating the symptoms of the disease because there is no specific cure and no available vaccine for humans.

The viral illness is transmitted to people by some kinds of mosquitoes after they bite infected wild birds. EEE attacks the central nervous system and causes inflammation of the brain. Symptoms can develop from a few days to two weeks after being bitten by an infected mosquito. They include rapid onset of fever and headache, followed by confusion,

drowsiness, seizures and coma.

Limiting the areas where mosquitoes can breed around your home is an important way of reducing their populations. Ways to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and reduce the risk of mosquito bites include the following:

- Make sure rain barrels have tight-fitting screens or lids;
- Remove any containers that can hold water, even a small amount, including tires and saucers under flower pots;
- Keep gutters clean and in good repair;
- Repair leaky outdoor faucets and change the water in bird baths and pet bowls at least twice a week;
- Use screened windows and doors and make sure screens fit tightly and are not torn; and
- Drain any standing water on your property that you can, such as puddles and ditches that hold water for more than a few days after rain.

“The best defense against mosquito-borne diseases is two-fold – protection and prevention,” said Rice. “Protect yourself and your family by applying repellants according to label instructions. It is also important to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes by eliminating any standing water in your yard.”

Remember that horses and other domestic animals can contract EEE and West Nile virus encephalitis also, so it’s a good idea to talk to your veterinarian about vaccinating these animals.

For additional information regarding the use of repellents see these Web sites: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/RepellentUpdates.htm> and <http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus/deet.html>. For additional information on mosquitoes, visit the following Web sites: www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm and www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus.

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