



**Public Health**  
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# CATTARAUGUS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
September 16, 2021

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## **Protect Yourself Against Mosquito-Borne Illnesses Horse died in Cattaraugus County from West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis**

Olean, N.Y. –The Cattaraugus County Health Department (CCHD) is urging residents to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites and protect themselves from potential exposure to the mosquito-borne illnesses West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). The CCHD has received notification from New York State Department of Health of a horse in the Conewango Valley area that tested positive for both WNV and EEE. The CCHD has a mosquito surveillance program and will work closely with NYSDOH to identify and test mosquitoes in this and surrounding areas of the county.

Both WNV and EEE are serious viral diseases that are transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. They are different diseases caused by different viruses and transmitted by different mosquito species.

Residents of Cattaraugus County are urged to follow these precautions to defend against mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellent properly. Those that contain DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus are most effective but should be used with care. Read the product label and use according to package instructions.
- Limit outdoor activities in areas where mosquitoes are most active and between dusk and dawn which is the peak mosquito biting time.
- If you have to be outside, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks as weather permits.
- Repair or replace all window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside.
- Reduce or eliminate all standing water.
- Empty or dispose of pails, cans, flower pots, or similar water-holding containers.
- Clear roof gutters, remove leaf debris from yards and gardens, and clean vegetation and debris from the edge of ponds.
- Turn over wheelbarrows and wading pools when not in use.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs and drain pool covers.
- Clean vegetation and debris from the edges of ponds
- Change the water in birdbaths and horse troughs twice a week.
- Dispose properly of old tires.

In August the Cattaraugus County Health Department conducted aerial larvicide spraying in the towns of Allegany, Carrollton, Great Valley, Hinsdale, Olean, Portville and the cities of Olean and Salamanca. The Health Department is discussing aerial spraying with adulticide and working with a pesticide applicator to obtain adequate supply to possibly spray in the Conewango area and possibly other locations within the county. Dr. Watkins, Public Health Director, stated.

Until we have a killing frost, all residents of Cattaraugus County need to protect themselves from mosquito bites when they are participating in outdoor activities he added.

The risk of contracting either WNV or EEE runs from June through September with peak activity late July to August.

West Nile virus (WNV) usually develops within 3 to 14 days after exposure; however, it may take up to three weeks for signs to appear in those with weakened immune systems. Many people who contract WNV do not experience any type of illness; an estimated 20 percent of people who become infected will develop mild symptoms including fever, headache, body aches, vomiting, diarrhea and possibly a skin rash or swollen lymph glands. The person's health usually improves after several days, but they may feel tired, weak and generally unwell for weeks. Less than 1 percent of people infected will develop severe symptoms that affect the central nervous system. These include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, muscle weakness, disorientation, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, coma, or inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) or of the membranes of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Most people will recover completely from WNV, even from a severe infection although in rare cases, death can occur.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a rare illness in humans but often a deadly disease. It is transmitted by mosquitoes and can affect humans, birds, horses and other mammals. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito will not develop any signs; however, of those who do, symptoms usually appear four to ten days later. Signs of EEE infection begin with a sudden headache, high fever, chills and vomiting. The illness may then progress into disorientation, seizures, coma or inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). It causes death in most cases; however, some people will survive the infection and have mild to severe brain damage for life. There is no specific treatment for EEE; care is based on symptoms.

There is no commercially available human vaccine for either WNV or EEE. The best way to protect yourself is to keep mosquitoes from biting you. EEE and WNV vaccines are available for horses in consultation with a veterinarian.