
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COUNTY URGES THAT HORSES BE VACCINATED AGAINST
EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS**

Health Department Reports “Early Season” Case of EEE

Horse owners throughout Burlington County are being urged to make sure that animals' vaccinations are current after the Mosquito Division of the county Health Department learned today that a three-year-old filly tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE).

The filly, kept on a farm in Westampton, was euthanized on May 27, 2012, from complications of the disease. The test results were provided by the state.

“What is more unsettling is that this case is occurring extremely early in the summer season,” said Freeholder Mary Ann O’Brien. “The experts tell us that typically cases of EEE, which are carried by mosquitoes, usually occur later and are most likely to peak in August.

“We have already collected a mosquito sample that tested positive for West Nile Virus,” O’Brien continued, “so this is telling us that the heavy rains this spring accompanied by unseasonably warm weather are generating a great deal of mosquito activity.”

The Mosquito Division sets traps throughout the County during warm weather to determine if any are carrying West Nile Virus or EEE. Division Supervisor Erin Nooney said that traps already have been set in the vicinity of the farm where the infected horse was stabled. Samples will be collected tomorrow and tested. The area also is being treated with truck-mounted sprayers as a precaution.

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Cases of EEE among horses are rare, but not uncommon; no cases were reported in Burlington County last year. Cases among humans are even more rare; however, it is considered one of the most severe mosquito-transmitted diseases, capable of causing death, or significant brain damage among survivors.

EEE virus cannot be passed from horses to humans by contact. However, the presence of a horse with EEE, or mosquitoes in the area that have tested positive, give cause for concern.

“For horse owners, the solution is simple enough,” said O’Brien. “Make sure your horses are vaccinated against the disease. For humans, the immediate answer is to prevent mosquito bites by wearing long-sleeved clothing at dawn and dusk, and by using a reliable insect repellent.

“Breeding sites in the yard, everything from flower pots to buckets to wading pools, need to be empty when not in use,” she continued. “Rain gutters ought to be cleaned to avoid clogs that can create mosquito breeding areas.”

Symptoms for EEE begin with headache, high fever, vomiting and chills. But victims can also develop seizures and disorientation. Treatment is difficult, since antibiotics are not effective.

The positive West Nile Virus sample was collected on May 27, 2012 in the vicinity of the Pemberton Township sewage treatment plant on Birmingham Road, and the area was subsequently treated for adult mosquitoes. While some three dozens WNV samples turned up last year, none has ever occurred this early in the season.

Symptoms of the more severe form of West Nile Virus include severe headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis.

However, most people exposed to West Nile Virus will not display any symptoms and some will have mild symptoms including fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph glands.

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