

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Health Department Encourages New Hampshire Residents to Take Precautions against Mosquito and Tick Bites**

Concord, NH - The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is encouraging residents and visitors to the State to take precautions against mosquito and tick bites to prevent diseases, such as West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), and Lyme disease. Ticks and mosquitoes are already out and the most likely time for them to spread disease is June through September.

During 2010, one animal and one person tested positive for WNV and one animal tested positive for EEE. There were also 1335 cases of Lyme disease reported. In 2009, 73 mosquito pools, 13 animals, and 1 person tested positive for EEE; there were no WNV positives in the State; and 1416 reports of Lyme disease were recorded.

"New Hampshire has been dealing with WNV since 2002 and more recently with EEE since 2004 and we have one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country," said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at DHHS. "It is therefore important that we remind residents that these diseases are preventable. It is essential that people follow the precautionary steps, such as using an insect repellent, to avoid becoming infected by one of these diseases. Enjoy all New Hampshire has to offer during the summer, but do it safely."

Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus are transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. EEE is a serious disease that carries a high mortality rate for those who contract the serious encephalitis form of the illness. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, and sore throat. A stiff neck is also a symptom of the severe form of the disease, which can lead to seizures and coma. Symptoms usually occur 4 to 10 days after being bitten.

For individuals who are bitten by a mosquito carrying West Nile Virus, the risk of contracting the infection is low and in the overwhelming majority of cases, there are no symptoms or just mild, flu-like symptoms. At times, West Nile Virus can cause meningitis and can be a serious threat to seniors, young children and those with compromised immune systems. If illness does occur, it typically happens within 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium that is spread by the bite of some ticks. Often, but not always, people bitten by an infected tick develop a large circular rash at the site of the bite. Sometimes people are not even aware they have been bitten by a tick. Symptoms of Lyme disease include symptoms such as chills, fever, headache, fatigue, stiff neck, swollen glands, and muscle and/or joint pain may be present. These may last for several weeks. If Lyme disease is left untreated for a few weeks or months, complications such as meningitis, facial palsy, arthritis, and heart abnormalities may occur and other body systems may be affected. Symptoms can appear anywhere from 3 to 32 days after infection. If

the tick is removed within 24 hours there is usually not chance of infection. Antibiotics are generally used to treat Lyme disease.

- Precautionary steps everyone should take to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes and ticks include:
- Using an insect repellent containing DEET against ticks and mosquitoes; picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 also work against mosquitoes
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors when mosquitoes are biting or while in brush, grass, or woods where ticks are found
- Tuck pants into socks to help prevent tick bites
- Do a thorough tick check, looking over all clothing and skin surfaces, when returning indoors
- Reduce ticks around your home by keeping grass short and reducing leaf litter

Monitor yourself if you are bitten by mosquitoes or ticks and tell your healthcare provider if you develop any symptoms

For more information about WNV, EEE, or Lyme disease, visit the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or call the DHHS Communicable Disease Control Section at 1-800-852-3345 x4496.