NEWS RELEASE
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Protect yourself and your family from mosquito-borne viruses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Recent cases of Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in horses located in Escambia and Elmore counties have prompted public health officials to remind people to be aware of mosquito-borne viruses. In Alabama, the principal mosquito-borne viruses are EEE, West Nile (WNV), and St. Louis encephalitis (SLE). Additionally, viruses such as chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis and dengue have been reported, but thus far all cases have been related to travel to the Caribbean or other tropical climates.

So far this year, there has not been a human case of EEE identified in Alabama; however, one case of WNV and one case of SLE have been reported.

The positive horses were confirmed by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries following testing at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The departments work closely together to monitor viral encephalitis cases in veterinary species such as horses and birds, so that people can be take appropriate mosquito prevention steps.

According to Dr. Dee W. Jones, State Public Health Veterinarian, the significance of positive horses means the virus is present in the mosquito population. He warns that the same mosquitoes that infect the animals also pose a risk to humans. The virus can only be spread through the bite of a mosquito, so positive horses do not increase the viral activity in the area, nor increase the risk to humans.

Mosquito-borne infections pose a health risk to all Alabamians, particularly during the summer months, because of warm weather and periods of heavy rainfall. For most of the state, mosquitoes are more abundant from late spring to early fall.

Human cases vary dramatically from year to year; the exact reason is not known. Dr. Jones added, "With all the outdoor activities in the warm weather months it may not be possible to avoid mosquitoes by staying indoors, but it is more practical to reduce mosquito bites with the use of widely available repellants."

The following are practical strategies for reducing mosquito exposure:

- Stay indoors if possible, especially during the dusk and dawn hours, when mosquitoes are most active.

- If you go out during the dusk and dawn hours, wear light-colored, tightly woven, loose clothing, and insect repellent.
- Wear enough insect repellent to cover skin and clothes that contain one of the following EPA-registered ingredients: DEET, Picaridin, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus/PMD or IR3535.

  o Contact your health care provider with concerns about repellents.
  o Do not use repellents under clothing.
  o Never use repellents over cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
  o Spray repellent on hands first and then apply it on children and faces. Do not apply to eyes, mouth, and apply sparingly around ears.
  o After returning indoors, wash treated skin and clothes with soap and water.

- Keep window and door screens shut and in good condition. Repair holes.

- Inspect your yard for places a mosquito could use to breed. Eliminate breeding sites.

  o Dispose of containers that collect water, like buckets, cans, bottles and jars.
  o Repair leaky pipes and outside faucets, unclog drains and gutters.
  o Empty and scrub birdbaths, pet bowls and animal troughs to get rid of mosquito eggs.
  o Dispose of unused tires. Overturn wheelbarrows, tubs, wading pools or store them under cover when not in use.
  o Keep weeds, vines and grass trimmed.
  o Fill tree holes with sand or mortar.
  o Change water in flower vases and pots twice weekly.

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