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ODH Reminder About How to Avoid Mosquito-Borne Illnesses

New Cases of Such Diseases Confirmed in NE Ohio; Suspected in SE Ohio

COLUMBUS — While the risk of contracting mosquito-borne illnesses may be low, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is reminding Ohioans about how to avoid mosquito bites and the possibility of such diseases. Cases of mosquito-borne diseases in Ohio typically occur in late summer and early fall when mosquitoes are most abundant.

Diseases that individuals can contract from infected mosquitoes in Ohio include West Nile virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), La Crosse Encephalitis (LAC) and St. Louis Encephalitis (SLE). Ohio currently has six confirmed cases of WNV, including one death. Three horses in Ashtabula County and one in Trumbull County recently tested positive for EEE – but such infections in people are rare, and Ohio has no confirmed human EEE cases. Two children in Athens County are suspected to have contracted LAC and are being treated while testing is under way. Ohio has no confirmed cases of SLE.

Individuals may contract these diseases if bitten by an infected mosquito. These diseases cannot be transmitted from person-to-person, and EEE cannot be transmitted from horse-to-person.

“While the risk of contracting these mosquito-borne illnesses may be low, it’s a good idea to take precautions to reduce the likelihood of getting mosquito bites,” said Dr. Mary DiOrio, ODH State Epidemiologist.

These precautions include:

- When outdoors, use insect repellent that contains an EPA-registered active ingredient such as DEET or picaridin on exposed skin and on clothing. On children, use insect repellents that have no more than 10 percent DEET.
- Avoid being outside during dawn and dusk.
- Wear light-colored long sleeves, pants, and socks.
- Eliminate all standing water from flower pots, buckets, and barrels to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in stagnant water.
- Change bird bath water weekly.
- Make sure all window and door screens are in good repair.
- Keep gutters clean and free of debris.

Most people infected with mosquito-borne viruses show no symptoms. However some people may have a mild fever, headache and muscle aches that will last up to a week. A small number of infected people may develop severe illness requiring hospitalization, with symptoms including confusion, weakness, stiff neck, tremors and convulsions.