



## NEWS RELEASE Mobile County Health Department

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[www.MobileCountyHealth.org](http://www.MobileCountyHealth.org)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Eastern Equine Encephalitis confirmed in sentinel chickens**

Dr. Bernard Eichold, Mobile County Health Officer, reports that sentinel chickens in two locations have tested positive for Eastern Equine Encephalitis. The locations are in the 36541 ZIP Code area and the 36544 ZIP Code area.

The Mobile County Health Department's Vector Control Department monitors encephalitis in sentinel poultry flocks strategically placed throughout the county to detect the presence of viruses carried by mosquitoes. Additionally, mosquitoes are trapped throughout the county and tested for Eastern Equine Encephalitis, West Nile Virus, and St. Louis Encephalitis. According to Vector Control personnel, aggressive surveillance and control activities are ongoing.

Eichold says that with outdoor activities, it is extremely important that residents take every effort to reduce their exposure to mosquitoes and that they should keep mosquito repellent with them at all times when working or taking part in recreational activities outdoors.

"Humans with encephalitis often have symptoms of high fever, severe headaches, confusion, and seizures that are severe enough to require medical attention," he says.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis and other mosquito-borne viruses such as West Nile Virus are transmitted from bird to mosquito to bird. Mosquitoes can spread these viruses by feeding on the blood of infected birds and then biting another host animal or mammal such as a horse or human. Although humans and horses can become ill from the infection, the diseases cannot be spread from people or horses. The likelihood of transmission to humans and horses can be decreased by personal mosquito avoidance and the use of an Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus vaccine in horses. There is no vaccine available for humans, Eichold said.

Eichold advises all horse owners to have their animals vaccinated against Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus, and to call their veterinarian immediately if signs of encephalitis are observed. Clinical signs vary, but they include depression, staggering, uncoordination, stupor, hyper-excitability, paralysis, and coma.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis can be more dangerous to people and other mammals than other mosquito-borne viruses. However the same mosquito-prevention measures reduce exposures to all such viruses. Bites to children should be watched for secondary infections that need to be treated by a physician. Mosquito bites can be treated with topical agents such as calamine and menthol lotions. Cortisone creams and oral antihistamines are available as over-the-counter medications that can reduce itching.

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The most effective and economical method to reduce adult mosquitoes is to reduce their emergence from as many breeding sites as possible with larviciding treatments. Inspectors regularly check areas with standing water for mosquito breeding and treat as necessary using both portable and truck mounted equipment. The inspectors also respond to service requests from residents to inspect backyard areas as well as to treat identified breeding areas and to provide education. Due to large volumes of calls received daily, service requests are responded to on a first-call, first-served basis and may take a few days to be addressed.

Each day, the Vector Control Department evaluates surveillance data, inspection reports, and service requests in order to target 10-12 routes out of a total of 50 routes for nightly mosquito control and spraying Monday-Friday. When necessary, weekday morning, weekend, and holiday spraying is provided. Spray trucks used for these operations dispense low volumes of aerosol insecticides and are equipped with a system that sprays the correct amount of insecticide for the speed of the vehicle. This allows for the proper application of insecticide at variable speeds.

People taking part in outdoor activities such as picnics, concerts in the park, or playing at a playground should take extra precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Mosquito activity peaks at dusk and again at dawn; People should restrict outdoor activity during these hours in heavily infested areas.

The Vector Control Department suggests taking the following precautions:

- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites by emptying all water from old tires, cans, jars, buckets, drums, plastic wading pools, toys, and other containers.
- Because mosquitoes are more active at dusk and dawn, try to limit outdoor activities during these times.
- Use a good mosquito repellent on exposed areas. Some of the most reliable repellants contain the chemical DEET. All repellants should be used in accordance with label instructions.
- Apply repellent on arms, legs, and other exposed areas, but never under clothing. After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Long sleeves and long pants used with a mosquito repellent help to limit bites.
- Wear light-colored clothing because dark-colored clothing may help attract unwanted insects.
- Wear a light-colored hat or a cap.
- Be aware that scented cosmetics may also attract insects.
- Mosquito bites can be treated with calamine and menthol lotions. Cortisone creams and oral antihistamines are available as over-the-counter medications that can reduce itching. Bites to children should be watched for secondary infections that might need to be treated by a physician.
- Citronella candles and repellents containing citronella can help, but their range is limited. Herbals such as cedar, geranium, pennyroyal, lavender, cinnamon, and garlic are not very effective.
- Keep window and door screens in good condition.
- Use yellow light bulbs in outdoor light fixtures. They attract fewer insects than do other bulbs.
- Remove the rim from potted plants and replace water in plant vases weekly.
- Replenish pet watering dishes daily and rinse birdbaths weekly.
- Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito-eating fish.
- Clean clogged gutters.
- Fill tree holes and depressions left by fallen trees with dirt or sand.

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- Rake and bag or mulch fallen leaves (especially sturdy magnolia leaves), which can curl and hold water in which mosquitoes to breed. Do not blow leaves into the storm drain or put grass clippings into drainage ditches. Clogging the drains and ditches will only add new mosquito breeding sites close to your home.

For more information, call Vector Control at 690-8124.

